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MANY WORLDS

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MANY WORLDS

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

K. P. S. MENON

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TO

ANUJEE

my constant companion
in India and abroad
who has shared all the experiences
told in this book
making the sweet ones sweeter
and the sour ones less sour
and yet somehow remaining
above and beyond them all

PREFACE

THE life depicted in this book falls into three periods of more or less equal length. The first may be called the preparatory period, covering home and background, school days in Kerala, and college days in Madras and at Oxford. The second period was spent in a specialized department, called the Foreign and Political, under the ICS, the 'steel frame' of the British Government of India. The last period was spent almost entirely abroad in the service of independent India, or India on the verge of independence.

I was born and brought up in Kerala but left it for nearly half a century in the first year of the first world war. I have now come back to it and find myself almost a stranger. No longer is Kerala dominated by women, as it used to be when we, Nairs, followed the matrilineal system. No longer are Travancore and Cochin, the two principal components of the state, ruled by Maharajas. No longer does the British Resident, representing the Paramount Power, live in imperial style in Trivandrum. Now Kerala is enjoying, or enduring, a democratic government. The scope of governmental activities has increased enormously, but this region no longer retains that political stability, social tranquillity and administrative efficiency for which it used to be famous. The disparity between the haves and have-nots, though greatly reduced in fact, is grossly magnified in theory. Communism is a perpetual bugbear; so, in fact, is the Congress with its communal and sectional dissensions. Thus Kerala has become a microcosm of the uncommon changes which have occurred in this century of the common man in India—and the world.

When I was born, millions of Indians and, indeed, Asians and Africans, knew but one world, ruled by *Pax Britannica*. By the time I passed out of college, the Russian Revolution of 1917 had taken place and the concept of two irreconcilable worlds, capitalism and communism, began to dominate political thinking. Under the stress of the second world war,

some persons, like Wendell Willkie, looked forward wishfully rather than hopefully towards 'one world'. But the two-world theory, of which Josef Stalin, on the one hand, and John Foster Dulles, on the other, were the principal protagonists, still ruled the roost. In the meantime, capitalism was transforming itself into a variety of shapes, some of which were hardly distinguishable from socialism; and communism too found it increasingly impossible to maintain the fiction of its monolithic unity. Moreover, a number of multicoloured States arose in Asia and Africa staining the white radiance of the Vasco da Gama era. Thus the concept of many worlds has replaced that of one world, or two worlds; and the problem of our generation is, to use John F. Kennedy's words, 'how to make the world safe for diversity'.

The Indian mind, wedded from time immemorial to the doctrine of unity in diversity, has recognized the existence of different worlds, different systems and different gods, and the possibility of their peaceful co-existence. I cannot claim that, like Dr Radhakrishnan, my predecessor in Moscow, I have been consciously animated by this politico-philosophic thought in the discharge of my duties, but it has perhaps been in my blood too—and in my wife's. This may explain why we felt at home in places as different from each other as Ceylon and the North-West Frontier, Princely India and the India of Jawaharlal Nehru, Kuomintang China and Khrushchev's Russia, dormant Africa and strife-torn Korea, the United Nations at birth and Hungary in the throes of its abortive rebirth. Doubtless we were more at home in some places than in others, but nowhere did we fail to experience the breath of human kindness and friendliness. I hope that, in writing the story of a life which began before the advent of the aeroplane and the motor-car, saw two major world-wars, two major revolutions and many minor ones, and has stretched into the nuclear era, I have been able to recount my experiences with malice toward none and charity for all—or almost all.

K. P. S. M.

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1

KERALA

I WAS born in the small town of Kottayam towards the end of the nineteenth century. Kottayam was then in Travancore State, but after India became independent it was merged with Cochin and British Malabar under the name of Kerala. The smallest of Indian states, Kerala leapt into the world's news in 1956, when the Communists won a majority in the general elections and formed a government there. That is the only occasion on which the Communists have come to power in any state in India or elsewhere as a result of genuine elections under a parliamentary system.

Even before Kerala became a single administrative entity, it had a cultural unity which marked it off from the rest of India. A narrow strip of land, stretching along the Malabar coast in the south-west corner of India, with the Arabian Sea to the west and the Western Ghats to the east, Kerala had developed its own way of life. Not that it remained immune from alien influences, but it assimilated them and absorbed them into its own peculiar pattern. The population consisted of Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Shankaracharya, the greatest Indian philosopher since Gautama Buddha, was a native of Kerala. The first Indian converts to Christianity were made in Kerala by St Thomas, the Apostle of Christ, in the first century A.D., and their descendants formed a flourishing Syrian Christian community. Similarly, the first Indian Muslims were the Moplas of Malabar, derived from Arab traders who married local women and settled down in the country. Some of the earliest Jews in the world were also in Kerala. In spite of this religious medley, the people had a homogeneous character. They spoke the same language, wore the same white dress, gloried in the same traditions and followed the same customs and manners. For instance, Onam, the great Malabar festival, at which an ancient king, Mahabali, was supposed to come to earth in order to see how his people

were getting on, was observed with equal enthusiasm by Hindus, Christians and Muslims.

The Nairs, the principal community in this region, still followed the matrilineal system. This meant that a man belonged to his mother's family, not to his father's. The woman was the centre of the family and descent was reckoned through her. Property too descended from the mother's side, not the father's. A man's lands and house would go not to his children but to his sister's children. In the royal families of Travancore and Cochin the throne passed to the Maharaja's nephew, not to his son. The Maharaja who was on the throne of Travancore in my childhood had no sisters. He was therefore constrained to adopt them. In order to perpetuate his line, he adopted two girls, of whom the younger gave birth to a son and provided him with a nephew and heir. The sons of the Maharaja did not count; the son of a former Maharaja was a bus-owner.

Many explanations have been given for the survival of this strange system. One is that the Nairs were a martial race; the men were away fighting and the women ran the house. Another explanation is that in former times the Nairs were addicted to polyandry. Naturally, if a woman had many husbands, it was difficult to say from which man a child had sprung. As anthropologists would put it, in Malabar — and not in Malabar alone — maternity is a fact, but paternity is only a theory. It was around the indubitable fact of maternity that the matrilineal system of Malabar was built.

The system was matrilineal rather than matriarchal. In the later stages the actual management of the household devolved on the eldest male member of the woman's family, who often turned out a tyrant. But women always had a voice; and in Kerala a woman knew how to make herself heard. Economically, the Nair woman was completely independent. She never regarded her husband as lord and master, because there was no material reason for her to do so. Among the Nairs, marriage was not a sacrament, as it was among the Hindus in general; no priest recited prayers at the marriage or invoked the blessings of the Almighty on the young couple or admonished, 'Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder'.

Nor was marriage a binding contract, as it was among Muslims. A marriage lasted only as long as the parties wished; in order to terminate it they did not have to go through the nauseating process of the divorce court. All that the woman had to do, if she was tired of her husband, was to put his sandals outside the house, which meant that he was no longer welcome. Incidentally, the proud Nair woman would not go and live with her husband; it was for him to go to her. Thus, in Kerala, marriage did not become an instrument of male tyranny or a religious rope tying two individuals unto death.

Yet this freedom did not become licence. I do not think that the Nair woman was ever more wayward in her marital relations than women elsewhere. The very existence of freedom meant an incentive to restraint. When I was in the Soviet Union I noticed that there, too, in spite of the facilities for easy divorce, the respect for family life was as great as in any other country in the world.

In the beginning of this century, the matrilineal system was in full force among the Nairs. Yet in certain families it was beginning to break up. Mine was one. My father often found it difficult to steer a course between his wife and his sister, neither of whom was lacking in character. The son of a cultivator in Ottapalam in British Malabar, my father, Kumara Menon, took a Law diploma at the age of 16 and wanted to start practice straightaway. This he could not do under the rules in British India; so in 1866 he moved to Kottayam in Travancore State. There he married the daughter of the District Munsiff and built a house in which he remained with his wife and children for fifty years. He was, however, never allowed to forget the existence of his real family, that is to say, his sister and her children in distant Ottapalam. For every rupee which my father spent on my mother, he had to spend an equivalent rupee on his sister, and both my mother and my aunt often complained that he was spending more on the other. These women were natural rivals, and I remember many an uncomfortable hour which my father spent between them.

My mother was a great raconteur and used to tell us the story of her marriage. In those days, marriages were arranged by the uncles or sometimes by the parents of the girl. My mother's father, however, had the consideration to tell her beforehand something about the persons he had in view. One, he told her, was Kumara Menon, who was not a beauty but was intelligent. The other was rich and handsome, but he was not so sure of his character. If she married Kumara Menon, her children would have brains; if she married the other man, her children would be good-looking. Whom would she prefer? 'As father likes,' she replied. She secretly hoped, however, that he would choose Kumara Menon, and he did so. My mother used to tell us that this choice proved sound, because the other person met with a bad end. He ran after women, and this tendency was the cause of his death. Once he was standing on the second story of a half-built house supervising its construction when he saw a good-looking girl passing by, and his eye followed her so intensely that he tripped, fell from the upper story, and died.

In appearance, there was a great contrast between my father and mother. My father was short, thin and unimpressive; my mother was tall and handsome. But her beauty was fatal to her education. Here is a story which she used to tell us: 'One day,' she would say, 'I was going to school with my friends. I was only 14 then. A couple of boys came from the opposite direction and, pointing to me, said, "That girl has magnificent breasts." They thought I would not understand, but I did. I knew then just a few words of English, even though I have now forgotten them. My temper flared up and I used an abusive Malayalam expression, the politest translation of which is, "Your mother's coconut!" Somehow my father came to know of this incident and he decreed, "Janamma shall not go to school any longer." That was the end of my education, and that's why I'm such an ignoramus.'

In those days, parents were conscious of the dangers of sending their girls to school. Female education had not yet become fashionable; and Travancore, where women graduates now proliferate, had to wait for another four decades before it produced the first of the species. She was good-humouredly

Part of a family group taken in 1906. The author is sitting between his father and mother, behind whose chair stands Gopi Chettan.

known as 'B.A. Parakutty Amma', for she was the first Malayali girl to have become a B.A.—and the only one for some time. Even in my generation, parents had serious misgivings about the wisdom of educating their daughters. I am reminded of a friend of mine, Jamaluddin of Hyderabad, whose daughter was anxious to go to college. Her mother sympathized with her desire to do so, but her father was not in favour of it. After long and heated arguments, Jamaluddin gave way, and his daughter went to Lady Irwin College, Delhi. She wrote ecstatically to her parents regarding the excitements of her life in college. Everything, she said, was wonderful. The food was good, the girls were nice, the teachers were kind, and she adored ping-pong. 'There!', exclaimed Jamaluddin on reading out this letter to his wife, 'I told you what would happen. She has fallen in love with a Chinaman, called Pingpong!'

All my earliest memories pertain to my mother. I remember how, holding me in her arms and nipping my nostrils with her fingers, she would dip me into the tank in our compound and pull me out again, and I would flap my little hands and feet and struggle for breath against an avalanche of water, and come out of it trembling with joy and fear. In that single moment I experienced the terror of death and the bliss of resurrection. I also remember how greedily I used to suck my mother's breasts. This is of course a universal experience, but few can recall it. The reason why I can is not that I have a longer memory but simply that I indulged in this habit longer than other children. My mother, who had not had a child for 17 years, let me suck her breasts, even though they had ceased to yield any substance, almost until my younger brother arrived when I was four years old. I was put to school soon after I was 3, and I would rush back from school and go straight to my mother and have a few tugs at her breasts. This gave me a nickname in school, *Mulakudian*, or the breast-sucker. I had another nickname, *Moonnumulayan*, or the three-breasted one, because below my left breast there is a mole which is almost exactly of the same shape and size as a breast. I was ashamed of the nickname given to me. One day I scratched away the nipple of the mole with my finger-nails and the blood started oozing out. When, many years later, I applied for a passport

in Madras to go to England, I had to specify my distinguishing marks in the column for that purpose in the application form. The Passport Officer examined my body and noted: 'Three breasts.' He was not so chivalrous as the French Passport Officer who described the eyes of a woman applicant as 'Dark, long, lustrous, but one missing'.

To Western or Westernized readers it might seem indelicate on the part of my mother to have talked to us about her 'magnificent breasts' or that I should have referred to them. In this respect the Indian and Western conceptions are different. One recalls the prudery of Mrs Nathaniel Hawthorne who systematically crossed out the word 'legs' from her husband's diaries. This attitude was once betrayed by Mrs Loy Henderson, the wife of the American Ambassador to India, who, after seeing the sculptures in the temple of Konarak depicting men and women in the most intimate poses, told me that she wished someone would drop an atom bomb on them (the hydrogen bomb had not been invented then). This showed a frame of mind derived from the medieval Christian attitude which regarded the human body as a den of evil, an abode of the devil. Indian art, on the contrary, regards the human body as a glory to God and paints it as such in both art and literature. How scandalized Westerners would be if some bold painter were to depict the Virgin Mary in the poses which Indian Goddesses have assumed in the cave temples of Ellora and Ajanta! 'One great folly of modern culture, typically English,' says Somerset Maugham, 'is the veil which has been cast over the natural functions of man. The scroll, "decency forbids", is placarded not only on street walls and corners, but on the very souls of Englishmen, so that numbers of harmless, necessary acts have acquired a tone which is almost pornographic. It is well to compare with this the candid simplicity with which in other ages the most refined minds treated those matters.'

The Nairs had no reason to shun the mention of breasts, for there they were for all to see. Women in Malabar wore just a loin-cloth and generally left the upper portion of their body uncovered. If by any chance a woman had cloth over her shoulders, she would remove it at the sight of a respectable person lest she should seem impertinently overdressed. In

our family talks, too, we did not regard certain portions of the human body as taboo. Opinions will always differ as to which is wiser, to be secretive about the human body or to be frank and uninhibited about it. I believe that we, who followed the latter course, certainly did not have minds less pure than those of young men in other countries, before whom their elders would hold their tongue on such matters.

The credit for my mental development during childhood goes almost entirely to my mother. From my infancy she would tell me stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. I would sit by her side every day until I was 14 or 15 years old and hear her read the *Puranas*. Gradually and effortlessly I came to know by heart many passages from these epics. My imagination was roused, and the figures of mythology assumed flesh and blood. Indeed they became my living companions. I knew the most precise details of the 18 days' war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas; I knew the more important casualties on each day and was thrilled by the heroic manner in which the protagonists met their deaths. I knew the differences between the principal characters and would often compare the Pandavas with the members of my own family. My eldest brother, placid and serene, resembled Dharmaputra; my elder brother, Gopi Chettan, with his tireless physical energy, was Bhima; and in my egoism, abetted by my mother, I compared myself to Arjuna. Having been taught to believe in the transmigration of souls I even put forward a theory that we were Pandavas in our previous life, but my mother told me that this could not be, for they had attained *nirvana* long ago. I knew the *Ramayana* as well as the *Mahabharata* and had the temerity to say that I liked the monkey-god, Hanuman, somewhat better than his master, Rama, whom I could not forgive for the way in which he treated Sita. My mother discouraged such impious judgements. I knew all about the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell. I knew the particular kind of punishment which would be meted out for a particular offence and tried to avoid it. Once my mother told me how Siva sometimes would appear on the earth as a beggar and go from house to house to test the goodness of man. Thereafter

I thought that among the beggars who came to our house—and they were a pestilential crowd—there might be someone who was Siva in disguise, and therefore I became more considerate to the beggars than I used to be. Indeed, at one time, after I heard the story of Hiranyakasipu from my mother, I thought I was surrounded by God on every side.

But it was not merely God who surrounded me, but also ghosts. In Malabar, Hinduism was but a layer on a primitive base of animism. There were spirits of every kind, some genial, others malicious, who had to be kept amused or appeased by man. There were also ghosts everywhere. Almost every day, after the day's work and before going to bed, some of our neighbours would turn up with the latest ghost stories. The most frequent visitor was old Ramankunju Kaniyar, a local physician and astrologer. He would tell us how a woman who had died at childbirth had been heard howling on the previous night; how a man who had been executed for murder had been seen roaming about headless; and how, when he went to see a patient at midnight, a ball of fire had followed him and gradually assumed the figure of a monster, and how he recited a mantra, at which that figure disappeared. Whether my father and mother believed these stories or not I do not know; but I certainly did. Night after night I would go to bed in a cold sweat and lie awake till the small hours of the morning.

On some nights I could not sleep at all. Once I resorted to a subterfuge. I kept some small stones under my pillow and when my parents had gone to sleep I threw stones about till the noise woke them up. The oil lamps were lit and a search was made for the culprit who had thrown the stones, but no one was in sight. After my parents had woken up, I felt less frightened and went to sleep. The next day we slept with all the windows closed, and still the stones came. Ramankunju Kaniyar was summoned and was told what had happened. He said that this was the work of a genial spirit, called Kutti Chathan, a kind of Puck who had been playing such tricks in some other houses also, and Kaniyar advised how this spirit was to be appeased. The expiatory measures recommended by the Kaniyar were taken; and the stone-throwing stopped,

for I did not have the courage to throw any more stones lest Kutti Chathan should be really offended.

On another occasion, sheer terror compelled me to do something of which I am still ashamed. After hearing some particularly gruesome stories I went to bed, as usual, with my younger brother on the same mat. My father and mother went off to sleep immediately. I lay awake, my imagination full of ghosts. I was too proud to wake up my mother and say that I was afraid. I then passed water on the bed and woke up my mother and said that Chandran, my younger brother, had done it. My mother did exactly as I thought she would. She scolded Chandran and asked me to climb into her bed and sleep by her side, and I still remember the peace and bliss of that sleep. My ruse was so successful that I repeated it on another day so as to be able to sleep in peace, hugging my mother. Again Kaniyar was summoned. He was informed that my younger brother had a tendency to pass urine in his sleep. Kaniyar prescribed some medicine and, at the same time, recommended that Chandran should be made to walk between the legs of an elephant. This was done in my presence. Seeing the fear in Chandran's eyes, I was stricken with remorse and went and confessed to my mother that it was all my doing. She kissed me and told me how glad she was that I had told the truth, and she prepared some *laddus* for me and let me sleep with her every day. Thereafter no more ghost stories were told in our presence.

My little world was inhabited not only by gods and ghosts, but also by animals. Our garden was full of snakes, squirrels, scorpions, frogs, centipedes, millipedes, chameleons, bumblebees, bandicoots, leeches and lizards of every description. They had come uninvited and settled down happily in our compound on the principle that possession is nine points of the law. None of them roused a feeling of hatred or aversion, for they were all parts of God's creation. Even the worst of them, the snakes, were not destroyed but propitiated and sometimes worshipped, and there were special temples dedicated to them.

In a different category stood the animals which we kept for our own sake. Among them were the dog, the cat, the cow, the goat, hens and bullocks. The dog was not our pet, but

our pet aversion. He was useful, but he had unclean habits, of which no one took the trouble to cure him; he was therefore regarded as an unclean animal like the sweeper. But whereas the sweeper knew his place, the dog did not; and a good deal of our energy was spent in keeping him to the courtyard and out of the house. Towards the cat, my attitude was neutral—until one day my mother referred to a woman whom she did not like, as a cat. What was wrong with the woman or the cat I did not know, but since my mother did not like them I did not like them either. This aversion to the feline species I have not yet been able to conquer.

Towards the other animals, we had great affection and gratitude. The cow yielded milk for the whole family; the goat gave milk for me, and me alone, for Ramankunju Kaniyar had prescribed goat's milk for my delicate constitution; the bullocks took me and my sister-in-law to school in a bullock-cart which was the normal mode of conveyance in those days; and the hens gave us eggs and ultimately their life and flesh.

My favourite animal was our elephant, Lakshmi. How big and strong she was, and yet how gentle, especially with us children! She would let me put my little hand into her mouth and keep it there as long as I wanted. Sometimes I would give her a coconut, and with uncanny skill she would herself remove the husk, break the shell and eat the kernel and share it with me. Often I would stand on her trunk, and she would swing it ever so carefully and deposit me on her back, and I would sit there during the temple procession, to the envy and admiration of my classmates. Fifty years later, my thoughts were full of Lakshmi, when, together with a representative of the Protocol Department of the Soviet Foreign Office, the Foreign Minister of the Ukraine and the Mayor of Odessa, I went from Moscow to Odessa and ceremoniously received two of Lakshmi's species, named Ravi (the sun) and Shashi (the moon), who had come by ship all the way from India with a message of friendship from the children of India to the children of Russia. These baby elephants were a present from Jawaharlal Nehru; and in sending them to Russia he wrote a letter to me saying, 'These are two Ambassadors from

India, apart from yourself; only, they will be specially accredited to the children of the Soviet Union.'

My father was too busy to take much interest in me; he was always surrounded by his clients. For fifty years he practised law in the same town, Kottayam, and by sheer ability and character built a place for himself in the public esteem as a lawyer and as a citizen. He kept his place even after the Bar, which consisted of only seven lawyers when he started practice in 1866, had swelled to 700, including some possessing English degrees. Many stories used to be told of my father's forensic skill. One day he went to court inadequately prepared and started arguing the case of the plaintiff, whereas it was the defendant who had engaged him. His junior was embarrassed and sent a note to him reminding him that he was the defendant's, and not the plaintiff's, counsel. 'Your Honour,' my father went on undaunted, 'so far I have been anticipating the arguments which the learned lawyer for the plaintiff might advance. I now proceed to repudiate them.' And he did this so effectively that he won the case.

My eldest brother, Sivarama Pillai, also joined the legal profession, married young and moved to Palai where a new Munsiff's court had been established. His wife, Ammukutty Akkan, was a gracious woman, a devoted wife for twenty years and, after my brother's death in 1923, a devoted daughter-in-law to my mother, who had no daughters of her own to look after her. In ancient China my sister-in-law would have earned a memorial. On my way from Chungking to Chengtu in 1944, I saw a monument with a tablet bearing an inscription in memory of a woman who had looked after her mother-in-law with exemplary devotion and who was guiltless of a smile. The first part of the inscription would apply to Ammukutty Akkan perfectly, but not the second part, for she smiled easily and well.

Ammukutty Akkan had been my brother's *morapennu* or 'entitled girl', that is, the girl entitled to my brother's hand, for she was his maternal uncle's daughter. Such marriages ensured that a girl at least indirectly enjoyed her father's property, which was bound to descend through his sister to

her children. Ammukutty Akkan had a beautiful sister called Madhavi, who was of marriageable age when I returned from England in 1922 and was my *morapennu*. Her schoolmates used to tease her as the would-be bride of an ICS man. My uncle put the proposal to me with imperturbable dignity, but by that time the matrilineal system was declining and an uncle's word was no longer law. I was fond of Madhavi, but as a sister. She married soon after I did and died young, but not before she had given birth to so many children that I used to tease her, saying that as her family was growing as fast as my own, she might as well have married me!

My first great excursion was to my brother's house in Palai. In those days travel for the people of Kottayam was limited to the area within the four bridges, each only a mile or so from the centre of the town: Kanjikuzhi to the east, Nagampadom to the north, Karapuzha to the west and Kodimatha to the south. To me therefore the 22-mile journey to Palai was an exciting adventure. One evening after dinner all of us got into our bullock-cart, in which a mat had been spread over the straw, and lay side by side like sardines. Parts of the road from Kottayam to Palai were said to be infested by robbers. Therefore my father insisted that, apart from the cart-driver, one of us should always stay awake. This was not difficult, as the ruts often jolted us out of our sleep. But despite the jolts and the fear of robbers I was sorry when the journey was over and we reached our destination by daybreak.

My other brother, Gopi Chettan, fascinated me and frightened me at the same time. Many people reacted to him in this manner. He had high spirits, which disturbed the sleepy atmosphere of Kottayam. He was an eloquent speaker and an enthusiastic member of the YMCA as well as the YMHA. For some time he threw himself into the Hindu revivalist movement. At dawn he would go from house to house, waking up the inmates and singing bhajans in his stentorian voice. He came under the influence of one Krishna Pillai, an inspector of schools, who was also a social reformer and fulminated against the caste system and other abuses which had crept into Hindu society. Pillai started his reforms in his own household. He insisted on the womenfolk having a

cold bath in the tank as soon as they got up. They, however, preferred to bathe after completing morning work in the kitchen. Thereupon Krishna Pillai resorted to a trick. He fell down in an epileptic fit; and the Kaniyar, who came to treat him and was hand in glove with him, said that the goddess Bhagavati was angry because the house was not sufficiently clean and that she expected all the inmates to have a bath as soon as they got up. Thereafter, the women had their baths regularly before the sun was up, and Krishna Pillai had no more epileptic fits.

Gopi Chettan's high spirits were resented by the older generation and envied by the younger. Handsome and dashing, he had a way with the girls. He would tease them and play the most extraordinary pranks on them. In particular, he was a terror to the girls going to the Baker Memorial High School. He would whistle to them and call them by their nicknames, and they would giggle into the corners of their loin-cloths. Among them was a girl who was destined to be his bride. Sometimes, Gopi Chettan's conduct went beyond the borderline. Kottayam in those days was a highly Puritan town, but there was a Syrian Christian girl, Kutta, who had established herself with a select clientele. I remember my mother and some of her friends whispering in horror how Kutta was beginning to cast her spell on my brother too. Kutta was then a buxom girl in her twenties. Thirty years later I saw her, an old hag selling *puttu*[1] to eke out a living. For old times' sake, Gopi Chettan would insist on buying *puttu* from her, telling his wife that Kutta's *puttu* had a special flavour!

At that time there was a Dewan of Travancore who was openly lascivious. When he went on tour he expected the officials to provide him with entertainment for the night. Once he went to Kottayam. The Tahsildar in Kottayam was a Brahmin with a beautiful wife. He pretended that she was having her menses and deputed Kutta to attend to the Dewan for the night; and, in order to make her doubly attractive, he lent her his wife's necklace. Kutta fulfilled her mission successfully but refused to return the necklace. This became the joke of the town. The Tahsildar's son was our classmate,

[1] A dish made of powdered rice and scraped coconut.

and some of the naughtier boys used to ask him whether Kutta had returned his mother's necklace.

Gopi Chettan was a problem for my parents. He was intelligent and always stood first in English and History. But he was hopeless in Mathematics; and without passing Mathematics he could not get through his Intermediate examination. Having failed twice, he was sent to Madras to study. There too, he failed in Mathematics and returned to Kottayam with something which had never been seen there before, a bicycle. One day a Namboodri saw my brother riding a bicycle with a cigarette in his mouth. The Namboodri had never seen such a spectacle before. He went home and told his family and friends that he had just seen an amazing sight, a vehicle on which a man was sitting, with smoke going into his mouth; evidently the smoke went into his inside and issued through the anus and thus turned the wheels of the bicycle!

My father did not know what to do with Gopi Chettan. Someone suggested that he might be sent to England; there he could appear for the Bar examination without passing the Intermediate. Moreover, ne'er-do-wells sometimes turned over a new leaf in England. There was only one danger, my father was told: English girls were vampires and would gobble up any young foreigner, and my brother would not be unwilling to be gobbled up. So it was decided that he should marry before he left for England, and he accepted this condition. He married the charming daughter of the Peshkar, or District Magistrate, of Kottayam and sailed for England three days later.

Kochetathi, my sister-in-law, moved into our house as was the custom and stayed with us for the three years during which Gopi Chettan was away. She was 14 years old and I was 8, and we grew very fond of each other. We went to school together, did our homework together, bathed in the same tank and slept on the same mat. I could not bear to be parted from her. Once, when she was having her menses and had to live in a separate room, I could not sleep because she was not near me. My mother tried to put me to sleep but failed. Eventually Kochetathi was permitted to come to my room and I went happily to sleep; but the next morning, having myself

become 'unclean' by touching an unclean woman, I had to immerse myself in the tank before touching anyone. My younger brother, who was then 5, used to hear her being spoken of as Gopi's wife. He therefore started calling her 'wife'. 'My fate is indeed strange,' said Kochetathi, 'I am married to one brother, called wife by another and have to sleep with a third!'

Let me say at once that my relations with Kochetathi were wholly innocent. I say this lest some disciple of Katherine Mayo, who had the scurrilous notion that the life of an Indian revolved round sex from the cradle to the grave, should read this book and jump to the wrong conclusions. If I had been double my age, my affection for Kochetathi might have been called Platonic. As it was, it was, I suppose, some kind of calf love.

In 1908 my brother returned in triumph from England. This was the first time the people of Kottayam had seen an 'England-returned' man. They had strange ideas as to how he would look and behave. They expected him to have become much fairer; they also expected him to speak with an English accent. My brother did not disappoint them. While in England he had developed a stoop. We, too, began walking with a stoop, for we thought that it was the fashionable thing to do, to keep your trunk at an angle to your legs. My brother had his watch on his wrist instead of in his pocket; he shaved with a safety razor instead of a cut-throat; and he carried his handkerchief in the cuff of his coat instead of his pocket. Above all, he brought with him a singing machine, the first time that a gramophone had been seen in Kottayam. He gave a concert in aid of the college building fund, and though the entrance fee was only four annas the concert fetched a thousand rupees. Gopi Chettan was a nine days' wonder in Kottayam.

Gopi Chettan left Kottayam a month after his arrival and set up practice in Madurai, and, to my sorrow, my sister-in-law went with him. She waved to us affectionately from the steamer which took her to Quilon while setting off on her great adventure. She seemed the happiest of girls; but how right Solon was, who said 'Call no man happy until he dies!' The last ten years of Kochetathi's life were clouded with suffering.

She strove hard to keep pace with her exuberant husband. She had four children, of whom three gave her much happiness and one much anxiety. In her early fifties she was stricken with multitudinous diseases, and in 1955 I was by her side when she lay dying by inches. The doctors, who had given up all hope, were surprised at her tenacity, for her life had been hanging by a thread for years. At last the thread gave way, and we, who had loved her dearly, almost heaved a sigh of relief when she was past all suffering.

When Kochetathi left Kottayam I was in my teens and beginning to feel the stirrings of adolescence. There was a certain amount of flirtation among the boys in Kottayam; and *Annan Kunnu* or Squirrel Hill behind the Church Missionary Society College had an unsavoury reputation. But such flirtation was a mild affair compared with the bestial varieties of homosexuality which I saw prevailing in the North-West Frontier Province some years later. In and around Peshawar there was as much jealousy, passion and bloodshed over boys as over women. I remember a gruesome case in Peshawar in which two hefty Pathans worked their will on a small boy in Shahi Gardens and then killed him lest he should give them away.

'My boys', said the Headmaster of a Public School in England, 'are amorous but seldom erotic.' I had an amorous attachment to a boy who was handsome and intelligent and lived in the finest house in Kottayam. I was proud to be seen in his company. He wrote ardent love letters to me. Not knowing how to write back in the same emotional strain, in my letters to him I copied out whole passages from a book which Gopi Chettan had brought from England, *Nelson's Letters to Lady Hamilton*. This juvenile affair lasted for a couple of years and was then forgotten by us both. We are still the best of friends.

During this period I shot up to 5′ 11″ and was already five inches taller than my father. I was however as thin as a lath and my mother regarded this as the sign of a delicate constitution. Therefore she did not permit me to play football; and my teachers, always willing to oblige her, exempted me even from school drill. In those days, football was regarded as a

rowdy game. Quite often the game ended with the referee being attacked by the defeated side and fleeing for safety. Once, as soon as an exciting match was over, I saw policemen rushing from all parts of the field to protect the referee and carry him off. In the school, there was a clear distinction between sportsmen and scholars. I was relegated to the latter category, and envied the former. My mother's solicitude for my health turned out to be a permanent disability for me, for I never took seriously to sports, though I enjoyed punting at Oxford and riding on the Frontier.

From a very early age a wholesome influence entered my life, Christianity. A familiar figure in my childhood was an old and handsome Syrian Christian woman who used to come to our home every Sunday with the Bible in her hand. She would sit on a mat, reserved for her, and read a couple of chapters from the New Testament. Then she would stay to tea with us; occasionally she would bring that Syrian Christian delicacy, *churuttoo*;[1] and she would go away as quietly and graciously as she came. What made her come to our house so regularly I do not know; perhaps she was paid a couple of rupees by some Christian mission to read the Bible in Hindu homes. She made no converts and did not expect to make any, but she made friends.

At school we began a more intensive study of the Bible. Every day the first hour of school work was devoted to Scripture. We learnt the Four Gospels one after another and the Acts of the Apostles and the Psalms too, but our study of the Bible, as our study of Shakespeare later, was simply with a view to examinations. It was only after the bogey of examinations lay behind us and I started reading the Bible for its own sake that I began to admire and enjoy its beauty and eloquence. At school the figure of Christ appealed to us, but to our minds, saturated with the legends of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, he was not sufficiently romantic. The miracles of Christ were wonderful, but how much more wonderful were the exploits of Rama who, with an army of monkeys headed by Hanuman, crossed over to Lanka and defeated the mighty Ravana and

[1] A dish made of rice, flour, jaggery, honey and coconut.

his giant horde, or the divine pranks of Krishna who was the beau of 1,008 lovely women and knew how to satisfy them all! After all, we thought, Christ was only the son of God; Rama and Krishna were Gods themselves.

Our teachers were under a special handicap in putting the Bible across to us. The Malayalam translation of the Bible was execrable. It was a literal translation, with the result that it not only lacked the beauty and power of the original but sometimes became positively droll. Let me take the Malayalam version of the Lord's Prayer as an example. The word 'bread' in 'Give us this day our daily bread' was translated as *appam*. *Appam* is made of wheat which is hardly ever eaten in Malabar; our staple food is rice. For a Malabar child to say 'Give us this day our daily *appam*' is as comic as for an English child to say 'Give us this day our daily semolina'. Again, 'Lead us not into temptation' was translated so crudely that it meant 'Let us not fail in our examination'. This was the part of the Lord's Prayer which I always recited with the utmost fervour!

Christianity did not make any special impression on us, but the lives of our Christian teachers certainly did. They were men who had consciously modelled their lives on the teachings of Christ. Nowhere have I come across a group of men more sincere, more selfless, more dedicated than the Syrian Christian teachers in the CMS School. They were among the earliest graduates of the Madras University; if they had joined Government service they could have risen to as high a position as any Indian could in those days; but they were content to receive a pay which never exceeded Rs. 80 (£6) a month, moulding the lives of a whole generation of men, some of whom made a mark not merely in India but outside. These teachers were distinguished by those virtues which are generally regarded as typically Christian, humility, patience, resignation and fortitude. If I have shown any trace of these qualities in my official or private life the credit goes to them; but it would be ungracious on my part to hold them responsible for my failure to possess those heroic qualities which enabled many a young man of my generation to play a notable part in the struggle for independence.

Of course, my teachers were not all of the same pattern. P. M. Kurien, the Headmaster, was an arresting figure and a strict disciplinarian. I called on him a few weeks before his death. He was then 84; he had just recovered from a serious illness and was soon to succumb to another. Yet his eyes had the old fire in them and his voice the old strength, so much so that I, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of India to the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland, felt like a schoolboy summoned to his teacher's presence. K. C. Cherian was of a different type. If Kurien ruled by the force of his personality, Cherian ruled by his gentleness. He did not walk the roads of Kottayam with such long strides as Kurien did. His step was measured; even if a thunderstorm broke, the pace would not increase. His words were measured too; he would not use one word more than was necessary, and he kept perfect discipline in his class. I was his favourite pupil, and to him I owe a special debt. It was he who introduced me to the treasures of English poetry. Tennyson was his favourite poet. On holidays, he would ask me to go to his house and introduce me to his delightful family, and then we would read together 'The Lady of Shalott', 'Sir Galahad' and 'In Memoriam'.

The poetry of Tennyson enthralled me in my school days, but long before I reached middle age Tennyson began to pall on me. His poetry was too smooth, too even, too perfect. Some of his sentiments, too, sounded supercilious. I resented his attitude:

> Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

His eyes were fastened on that

> one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves

but he seemed indifferent to the misery and hardships from which a large portion of creation, even in Europe, was suffering. Among Victorian poets, I preferred Browning to Tennyson; the twists and turns of his fancy and the rugged poetry in which they found expression appealed to me far more than Tennyson's placid style. In my book *Delhi-Chungking*, I wrote that I

walked on the banks of a Himalayan river which 'bubbled like Tennyson's Brook and babbled like Tennyson himself in his less inspired and thoroughly self-conscious poems'. This passage hurt K. C. Cherian; he thought that for once I was irreverent.

Reverence was a quality to which Cherian attached the highest importance. Once, for a whole hour, he dwelt on the profound significance of Tennyson's lines:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell.

A few months before he died he told me that the present generation lacked reverence; that was why mankind had reached its present plight. I agreed with him and quoted the lines of T. S. Eliot:

> Where is the Life we have lost in living?
> Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
> The cycles of heaven in twenty centuries
> Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.

K. C. Cherian was moved by these lines; he had not heard them before. He copied them in a book of quotations which, even in his seventies, he used to keep by his side. That was the last quotation he entered in his book, and it was my last meeting with him.

My father, who did not know a word of English, began to suspect that English education was beginning to have a demoralizing influence on me. Some of us, all in our early teens, founded a society with the high-sounding title, 'The Rising Star Literary Association'. I was elected President of this society. I was also the first speaker, and my subject was 'Superstitions'. Kerala was, and to some extent still is, a state ridden by superstition. We could not turn to the right or to the left without consulting an astrologer. For any event of any importance in our life, we had to find an auspicious day, which depended on the position of the stars and several other elements. For betrothals and marriages, for bringing the bride to the house, for naming a new-born baby, for giving him

the first feed of rice and for cutting his hair for the first time, for starting a journey, even for taking medicines and planting trees, a good day had to be found. Omens were equally important. If the first object one saw on setting out on a journey was a king, an elephant, a cow, a prostitute, a corpse, wine, flame, ghee, curds, honey, sandalwood, white flowers or uncooked meat, it meant that the journey would be safe and profitable. If, on the contrary, one saw a priest, a widow, a cripple, a sweeper, a donkey, a buffalo, a cat, oil, salt or firewood, the journey would end in disaster. If one saw the new moon on a Sunday, it meant comfort for the succeeding lunar month; on Monday, shame; on Tuesday, death; on Wednesday, fear; on Thursday, wealth; on Friday, happiness; and on Saturday, illness. If a girl had her menses for the first time on a Sunday, it meant that she would be a spinster; Monday indicated chastity; Tuesday, widowhood; Wednesday, maternity; Thursday, good progeny; Friday, beauty; and Saturday, calamity. I spoke vehemently at the Rising Star Literary Association regarding the absurdity of such beliefs. The meeting was held on the veranda of our home, Gopi Vilas; and my father and mother overheard my speech with horror. It was not only rebellious, but positively sinful, on my part, to have given utterance to such heterodox views. My father waited for the members of the Society to depart and gave me a sound scolding. That was the end of my youthful crusade against superstitions. Thereafter, I was content to follow them, when it was convenient for me to do so, even though I did not believe in them. I must confess that I carried into my public as well as domestic life this tendency to follow the line of least resistance in matters which did not count—which perhaps explains any success I have had in either.

There is a superstitious belief which has clung to my person ever since my infancy. I am supposed to have the *karinakku*, or the 'black tongue'. Roughly corresponding to the evil eye, it means that if I say something good about a person—or thing—some misfortune will befall him. There stands in Kottayam even today a coconut tree, which bore fruit unusually early, in its third year, and on seeing which (so my mother used to say) I, as a child of three, exclaimed, 'What

lovely fruit!' That was the last time it bore fruit! I am specially dangerous to children. If I say that a child is plump or sweet or chubby, the horrified mother insists on my licking ts hand or face, for only in that way can the resultant misfortune be averted. Once I stayed with Mrs. Kaithail Jacob in Colombo and greatly admired her poultry, of which she was rightly proud. The next time I stayed with her, I inquired about the poultry, and she said: 'Please don't talk about it. The day after you left, the fowls started drooping and dying one after another; and now not one is left.' Once N. R. Pillai, a friend of mine ever since we were children of seven, had me as his guest at Simla. One day he showed me his muscles so as to impress me with his strength, and I told him that he should have been an acrobat. That evening he returned from the secretariat with a bad cold and cough which developed into influenza and confined him to bed for a week. But my most illustrious victim was Stalin. I had an interview with Stalin in 1953. It made headlines in the world's press, for to see Stalin was a rare privilege. There had been rumours that Stalin was ill, dying or even dead.[1] On my return to the Embassy from the Kremlin, I told the assembled newspaper correspondents that Stalin looked perfectly healthy. This happened on the 18th of February. Stalin was taken ill on the 28th of February and died on the 5th of March. Three weeks later, I presented my credentials as India's Minister to Hungary and called on Rakosi, the Prime Minister. At the end of an hour's talk, Rakosi said, 'You may tell the press whatever I told you; only please don't tell them that I looked perfectly healthy.' Subsequently, I often wished I had said that Rakosi looked perfectly healthy, for if any one individual was to be blamed for the revolution in Hungary, it was this sinister Jew of Hungarian origin, who, thoroughly Russified, or Stalinized, shoved large doses of Stalinism down the throats of his people until they could bear it no longer, rose against it in anger and shook him off and nearly shook off the communist yoke in Hungary.

[1] An American newspaper said that the man I saw was not Stalin, but one Krutikov, an actor in the Bolshoi theatre, who impersonated Stalin.

I suppose the explanation of my *karinakku* lies in Bacon's observation in his essay on Superstitions: 'Men mark when they hit and do not mark when they miss.'

My social conscience was easily disturbed, but as easily appeased. On my twelfth or thirteenth birthday, my father asked my teachers, almost all of whom were Christian, to a meal. To my surprise the meal was served to them on the veranda and not in the dining-room inside the house. What was worse, after dinner they had themselves to remove the banana leaves on which dinner had been served, as no Nair servant would touch a leaf or dish on which a Christian had eaten. I asked my mother why my teachers had been treated so shabbily. 'Custom,' she replied. The teachers did not resent it, nor did they regard it as a sign of disrespect; indeed, they knew how great was my parents' esteem for them. They, too, attributed it to custom. A few years later, I remembered this incident and the sway of custom in Kerala, when I read the lines of Sophocles:

'Tell me when was Custom born,
Yester eve or yester year?'

'Days and years she knoweth not,
She was always here.'

Custom prescribed that caste Hindus might have entry into the house, that Christians should not go beyond the veranda, that Ezhavas should remain in the garden and that Pulayars and Pariahs should stand on the road in front of our house. Once I was shocked to see, on my father's birthday, hundreds of untouchables scrambling for the crumbs of food which we and our guests had left behind on the banana leaves from which we had eaten. But I was assured by my elders that these untouchables were now paying for the sins which they had committed in their previous births and that, if only they would behave decently in this life, they could hope for a better life in their next birth. Similarly, if I behaved badly in this life, I might become like these untouchables in my next life; if, on the contrary, I was good and virtuous, I might be reborn in a higher caste, I might even become a Brahmin. I decided then

and there not to lead too virtuous a life, for I did not want to become a Brahmin and deprive myself of the pleasure of eating eggs, fish and chicken. Moreover, through no fault of theirs, the Brahmin boys in our school were not particularly liked by the others. They had prodigious memories; they scored high marks in all subjects and especially in Mathematics; they were at liberty to read the sacred Vedas, which we were not; and every day they could get a meal free in the *uttupura* (feeding-house) attached to the temple. In those days, Brahmins in Travancore used to be fed free in all the temples at the expense of the State in the belief that their prayers were essential to the State's prosperity. Some years later, a Brahmin Dewan of Travancore took his courage in both hands and abolished this custom, which was demoralizing to the Brahmins themselves.

My father was, as fathers used to be in those days, authoritarian. His word was law, and we had to conform strictly to the time-table laid down by him. We had to rise at 6; do homework from 7 to 8; have rice *kanji* at 8·30; attend school, with an hour's mid-day break, till 4.30; play games in our own garden from 5 to 6; join in the family prayers till 7; do evening homework from 7 to 8; have supper at 8.15 and listen to the reading of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* from 9 to 10. This time-table went on day after day with as much regularity as the sun which rose and set punctually throughout the year.

For the first 12 years of my life, I was glued to Kottayam. In those days, travelling for the pleasure of travel was unknown. Occasionally, an old couple would write their will and set out for Banaras in the hope, which was sometimes fulfilled, of laying their bones in the sacred Ganges. Occasionally an impetuous young man, having quarrelled with his maternal uncle, would go and seek his fortune on the tea and rubber estates in Ceylon and Malaya. But such incidents were rare.

The only long journey which I remember having performed before I entered my teens was one from Kottayam to Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore, where my father had to attend the Praja Sabha, the People's Assembly, as an elected member from Kottayam. The distance to Trivandrum was only 90 miles and the journey took three days. But what a

glorious journey! In a country boat, over rivers, canals and lagoons; the boatmen singing and unfurling the sails as soon as the river or lagoon became too deep for them to punt; the sails, now puffing with the wind, now making a right-about turn and drooping; the boatmen catching and cooking fish and sharing it with us; the boat being tied up at Aleppey or Quilon so as to enable us to go on the sands and cook our meals and eat them after a dip in the sea; the coconut trees on the river banks waving to us and, beaten by the winds, bending down and doing homage to us; a storm brewing in the beautiful Ashtamudi (eight-cornered) lake and beating down on us, despite my father's loud prayers, and the tide threatening to drag our little boat into the sea, only a few furlongs away; and nature hugging us and, sometimes in convulsions and more often smiling and benevolent, displaying her different moods! Alas, a journey like this has become a thing of the past. Now, it takes three hours by car, instead of three days by boat, to go from Kottayam to Trivandrum. And if Kottayam is connected by air with Trivandrum, as Cochin already is, the journey will take less than half an hour. There was great wisdom in the response of the Dalai Lama who, when told by Sir Charles Bell that Miss Amy Johnson had flown in a solo plane in record time from London to Australia, asked him, 'But why was the honourable lady in such a hurry?'

There was one institution which competed with the home in our affection and that was the temple. Thirunakkara temple was at once a house of prayer, a social club and a cultural centre. There we would go, especially on the days preceding the examination, and pray lest the arithmetic paper should prove too hard. Thither, a young man and a young woman, whom the elders and the astrologers had destined for each other but who were not expected to meet before marriage, would go ostensibly for worship but in reality to have a glimpse of each other, and their companions would nudge them in the ribs and crack a ribald joke or two, and say, 'There goes your beloved.' In that temple, stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* would be performed in the form of that ancient dance mime, Kathakali, or sung with rhythmic gestures in the

form of Ottam-thullal. Or a Chakyar, belonging to the hereditary clan of story-tellers, would relate tales from the epics and compare mythical heroes and villains with their contemporary counterparts, and so pillory the unpopular officials of the town, to the huge merriment of the audience. Above all, in the month of April, there would fall the annual temple festival, accompanied by dances and fireworks and gaily caparisoned elephants. Once a sex-mad elephant ran wild and gored its drunken keeper to death; that was the talk of the town for months.

In the evening of one's life, one is apt to exaggerate the glory of the morning. Yet, objectively speaking, I doubt whether anyone could have had a happier childhood than mine. I was surrounded by affection on all sides—my mother's extravagant affection, the discriminate affection of my father, and the approving and almost admiring affection of my teachers. Moreover, I had faith. God was in heaven and all was well with the world. I did not then dream that within three years of my leaving Kottayam, a large section of humanity would make a determined effort to dislodge God from heaven and earth or that I was destined to spend nine years of my life as my country's representative amongst the ungodly, but by no means unvirtuous, Russians. My horoscope, which was prepared by a famous astrologer-poet, Panthalam Krishna Varier, had predicted that the conjunction of stars in my case meant '*anya desa vasam*', or residence in foreign countries. This prediction has been amply fulfilled, for after 1914 I was seldom able to visit Kerala. Another of his predictions was '*sundara sthree sambhogam*', or intercourse with beautiful women. This forecast was disquieting to Anujee, but I at once flattered and comforted her by telling her that *sthree*, which could be construed as 'woman' or 'women', stood in this context in the singular.

Life in Travancore in the early years of this century was characterized by a singular absence of problems. There was no political problem. The British Empire was regarded as something immutable, everlasting and, on the whole, beneficent. Victoria the Good had presided over it so long that

something of her goodness seemed to cling to it even after she had passed away. Some persons, indeed, had doubts about the goodness of the British Empire, but even they took its existence for granted. The most that the Indian National Congress advocated in those days was greater self-government within the Empire, not independence or dominion status. Indian history was written and taught in such a way that we regarded Clive and Warren Hastings as heroes and Siraj-ud-Daula and the Begum of Oudh as villains. One of the favourite subjects for essay-writing in school was 'The benefits of British rule in India'. True, in Bengal, pricked by Lord Curzon, the spirit of nationalism was beginning to show itself in the boycott of British goods and stray acts of terrorism. This awakening left Travancore untouched. The people of Travancore revolved round their own Maharaja, who was a most estimable individual. There were whispers against his favourites such as Sankaran Thampi and Saravana, but his personal life was above reproach and he was regarded almost as a saint. My mother always included him in her prayers as 'the golden Maharaja, the giver of our rice'.

If there was no political problem in Travancore, there was no social problem either. There were of course social distinctions, and the caste system had been elaborated in Kerala more than in any other part of India. Not only were there the four principal castes, but each of these was divided into a hundred subcastes, and the members of one caste could not intermarry or interdine with any other. The vocational basis of many subcastes still persisted. A mason's son would be a mason, a carpenter's son would be a carpenter, an astrologer's son would be an astrologer and so on. There was no scramble for government offices, which was to become the bane of Kerala later. Duties, and not rights, regulated a man's conduct; and people generally followed the prescription of the Gita that 'It is better that a person should discharge his own duty, however drab, rather than another's, though more attractive. No harm can befall a person for doing his prescribed duty'.

Who would have thought that Kerala, which in my childhood was so serene and tranquil, would in another fifty years be torn by dissension of every kind, sectional, communal and

ideological, that it would be the scene of the first—and, one hopes, last—Communist government in India and that this state, which used to have no problems at all, would come to be known as India's Problem State?

2

MADRAS

NINETEEN-FOURTEEN was a turning-point in my life as well as in history. Many of the comfortable illusions of the nineteenth century were found to have been childish, and my own childhood came to an abrupt end. I passed my School Final, or Matriculation, examination in 1914 and was ready to go to College. There were vehement debates in the family whether I should continue my studies in Kottayam or go to Trivandrum or Madras. My brother was all for Madras. He said Madras would enlarge my mind and draw out my talents. My mother was the leader of the opposition; she thought I was too young, too delicate of health and too immature in mind to go to a distant place like Madras. True, my brother had been to Madras, but he was much older and more robust in body and mind. All the more reason, said my brother, that I should be sent to Madras; Madras would make a man of me. Not a man like you, my elders scoffed, riding a bicycle, stuffing your nostrils with Balamani powder and staining your loin-cloth with tobacco. So the arguments went backwards and forwards. Eventually, my mother gave in and I went to Madras.

During the first few months there I felt intensely homesick. That was the first time I had been torn away from home. My home used to be my universe. It was my real school; the CMS school was merely an auxiliary which prepared me for the examinations. It was in the home, through the incessant reading of the *Puranas* and recitals from the epics, that I came up against the mysteries of life and death, good and bad, right and wrong. The home was also my playground. Other boys went out to play a rough-and-tumble game called football; I, because of my delicate health, was allowed to play only the more decorous games in our own yard. Our home was a club, too; there the members of the Rising Star Literary Association met and discussed less obnoxious subjects than superstitions.

In Madras all this became a memory. What I missed particularly was our garden in Kottayam. The objects of this garden had become my intimate companions—the 'red coconut' tree which, unlike its fellows, bore fruit of a golden, not green, colour; the neem tree, the leaves of which were in great demand during the smallpox season, because they were regarded as an antidote; the cashew-nut tree, at which we would throw stones and from which we brought down the fruit before it was fully ripe; the jack tree, on which hung fruit like the pendulous breasts of an ageing Amazon; the ferns, the crotons and the creepers; the touch-me-not which folded up at the slightest brush; the jasmine from which the women in our household would pluck the flowers after they had had an evening bath in the tank and which they would put in their hair, with the result that at night the whole house reeked with an intoxicating smell, compounded of the scent of the jasmine flowers in the women's hair, the sandal paste on their foreheads and the fragrant oil with which they anointed their bodies.

Now, away from it all, I stayed in Madras in a drab house at No. 2, Naval Hospital Road, Egmore. The house abutted on the street and had no garden. Adjoining it was a *paracheri*, or untouchables' quarter, where men and women lived with, and like, their animals. The most noxious smells, vying with the smells of the open drain in front of our house, emanated from there. Every year there was a cholera epidemic; it picked off its victims right and left, and we lived in terror as to when our own turn would come. On Naval Hospital Road there were also three or four Eurasian houses, in which the gramophone blared out loud tunes day and night.

My lodgemates were all older than me. I felt raw and green as compared with them. They were men; I was but a boy, and a mother's boy at that. To begin with, I was frightened of them; they seemed so coarse and their talk sounded so vulgar. I was like a plant grown in a hothouse, suddenly exposed to sun and air. But gradually I began to shed my shyness and to cultivate a more manly bearing.

Two of my lodgemates in Madras turned out to be lifelong friends, N. Krishnan Thampi and K. R. Gopala Pillai. It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than between them.

Krishnan Thampi spent his life in the Health Department of Travancore and, by dint of hard work and persistence, practically eliminated such epidemics as cholera, smallpox and plague, which formerly used to visit the State every year. K. R. Gopala Pillai, on the contrary, did nothing at all in life. One thing he tried to do: he married. But he soon found out that it was too much of a bother and left the girl to herself. Yet he is the most delightful of men; he would go from house to house in Kottayam and, when the health of his septuagenarian mother, to whom he was devoted, permitted, from town to town in Travancore, meeting old friends, making new friends, making old women happy by gossiping with them and young girls happy by making them sing, and spreading, wherever he went, an atmosphere of geniality and good fellowship. In the Soviet Union, he would have been sent to Siberia; the Constitution of the USSR says: He who does not work, neither shall he eat. But K. R. Gopala Pillai has shown that a man can be entirely idle and yet be completely happy and make others happy. Society will be the poorer for not having men like him, but society would cease to function if all men were like him.

In Madras we lived a very frugal life. Our monthly allowance, including college fees, was Rs. 30. We could not afford to spend more than Rs. 18 a month on our meals. The meals in our lodge were jointly organized, and each month one of us in turn had to be in charge of the accounts. When my turn came I was completely at sea. I did not know how to control the cook or scrutinize his accounts. The result was that in that month the share of each person's expenditure shot up from Rs. 18 to Rs. 20. My lodgemates criticized me severely and I burst into tears. Then they took pity on me and exempted me from the task of running the house. I was glad to have a similar exemption permanently granted to me after my marriage. There is nothing I dislike more than handling cash; and I was greatly relieved when I found that Anujee had a good business head and that she was willing to take complete charge of our finances. At the end of my service, when I was Ambassador at Moscow, my monthly emoluments came to Rs. 9,700. Of this, Rs. 250

went to my personal account in the State Bank of India. That was the only amount I could call my own, and I spent it mostly on subscriptions and donations.

My stay in Madras cured me of many complexes which I was beginning to develop in Kottayam. There I was becoming egocentric. Madras made me accustomed to the company of my fellow men. It also made me less afraid of ghosts. It is not an exaggeration to say that in Kottayam I had been living in two worlds—a world which centred round my mother, and another which was inhabited by ghosts, goblins and spirits. The moment I came to Madras, these weird creatures disappeared. Their natural habitat was the lagoons and river banks of Travancore and its thick, dense forests, where there was perpetual twilight. They could not flourish in the bleak atmosphere of sun-dried Madras. And there was no Ramankunju Kaniyar in Madras to tell me more stories about them and to revive them in my imagination.

In my new surroundings in Madras there was a great deal to interest me and I began to look outwards rather than inwards. I took more exercise in Madras than I had ever done before. I went on long walks to the beach, which was the glory of Madras, and started playing tennis. I also developed the habit of reading newspapers. In Kottayam, I used to read only one paper, the *Malayala Manorama*, which was a weekly in those days. All the members of the family would sit around an oil lamp every Saturday evening and read the *Malayala Manorama* and, in particular, my brother's London Letter. In Madras we read the pro-Government *Madras Mail*, the anti-Government *New India* and the sedate, middle-of-the-road *Hindu*.

In Madras I was in a much bigger world than in Travancore. My fellow students came from all parts of the Madras Presidency and spoke different languages: Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. There was a handful of students even from North India. Among them the most attractive was a tall and willowy Kashmiri girl, Miss Handoo, subsequently Lady Rama Rau, a favourite of Mark Hunter, Professor of English Literature. For the most part, the

students of different regions formed different groups and kept to themselves. Occasionally, there arose a friendship overriding all communal and religious barriers.

I must record an embarrassing experience which I had in Madras. A young man of about my age, aesthetic, and in his own way idealistic, attached himself to me. He belonged to a family of artists and was himself artistic. He had an attractive face, with red lips, unusual in an Indian. There was absolutely nothing carnal in his friendship for me: it was entirely Platonic. At first, I felt pleased and flattered by his attentions. He suggested that the great friendship between him and me should be cemented by marriage. He would marry a niece of mine, B, and I should marry a cousin of his, A. Readily, though somewhat nonchalantly, I agreed. We would often walk to the beach, sit on the sands, write the names of A and B on the water's edge, see if they were washed away by the advancing waves and, if they were, regard it as an evil omen. To me all this was fun; he, as I realized later, was dead serious. As time passed, he became more and more exacting. He had spasms of jealousy if I seemed to enjoy the company of anyone else. When he thus tried to establish a monopoly over my soul, I moved away from him, having inwardly rebelled. Inwardly, not outwardly, for I did not have the courage to repulse him or the heart to distress him. However, a couple of years later, when I went to Oxford, I dropped him. I stopped writing to him, and he was too proud to be the first to write to me. Three years later I passed into the ICS; and then I received a letter from him, red-hot with passion, pouring out his undying affection for me and his agony at my silence, reminding me of our agreement about A and B and saying that he loved B still and that A was still in love with me. I replied that all that was a thing of the past, that I had forgotten this teen-age affair and that he should forgive me for not having put him wise earlier. Deeply hurt, he proposed to the first girl he met, married her, loathed it on the very first day of his marriage, married another and still another, then took to spiritualism, grew a long beard and has settled down as a yogi.

I am afraid I was the villain of the piece. I should not have led him up the garden path—or, rather, I should not have let him think that I was being willingly led up the garden path by him. But in those days, and for many years after, I had a temperamental disinclination to say no to a man's face. When I was posted to China, before the Revolution, I thought the Chinese too suffered from this disability. The Chinese Foreign Office hardly ever vouchsafed a negative reply to us. We had to infer from the surrounding circumstances, the delay in their reply, the tone of the official conveying the Government's reactions, etc.. that the reply was in the negative. It has been said that the difference between a lady and a diplomat is that when a lady says 'no' she means 'perhaps'; when she says 'perhaps' she means 'yes'; and if she says 'yes' she is no lady: whereas when a diplomat says 'yes' he means 'perhaps'; when he says 'perhaps' he means 'no'; and if he says 'no' he is no diplomat. Perhaps, in refusing to say 'no' from the outset to my friend in Madras and in meaning no more than 'perhaps' when I said 'yes', I was already showing that I was fitted for my future career!

Not only diplomatists, but some others who have distinguished themselves in other walks of life have cultivated this trait in relation to their fellow men. 'I made it a rule', says Benjamin Franklin, 'to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiments of others and all positive assertion of my own. I even forbade myself the use of every word or expression in the language that imported a fixed opinion, such as *certainly, undoubtedly,* etc.; and I adopted instead of them, *I conceive, I apprehend,* or *I imagine* a thing to be so or so, or *It so appears to me at present.* When another asserted something that I thought an error, I denied myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right, but that in the present case there *appeared* or *seemed to me* some difference, etc. I soon found the advantage of this change in my manners: the conversations I engaged in went on more pleasantly; the modest way in which I proposed my opinions procured them a readier reception and less contradiction;

I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevailed with others to give up their mistakes and join with me when I happened to be in the right.' By and large, this has been my own experience.

My arrival in Madras coincided with the outbreak of the Great War. There was a widespread and spontaneous display of loyalty to Great Britain in her grim ordeal. I remember attending a public meeting at which Indian politicians, judges of the High Court, lawyers, doctors, teachers and students spoke fervently of the justice of Britain's cause and offered to make any sacrifices for its triumph. There was no such popular demonstration on the outbreak of the Second World War, even though Britain's cause was even juster. Public opinion was then made by the Congress declaration that India had not been consulted before Britain dragged her into the war; and Churchill refused to define Britain's war aims. Indeed, he deliberately excluded India from the scope of the Atlantic Charter, proclaimed by him and President Roosevelt; and Roosevelt's Four Freedoms were no substitute for the political freedom of India, on which people had set their hearts.

One of our hobbies in Madras was to attend public meetings. We attended lectures by the dozen. The taste for attending lectures had been generated in me in Kottayam by one S. K. Nair. He was a professional lecturer and had a striking personality. He had a moustache and side-whiskers and was always dressed in the best English style. He had a protuberant paunch, over which was suspended a gold watch and chain. He used his paunch to give greater force to his perorations. I saw him once turning his paunch to the right and to the left alternately and exclaiming: 'I do not believe in Hinduism or in Buddhism, or in Christianism or in Mohammedanism,' and then keeping it in front and raising it up and down and asserting: 'I believe in Indifferentism.' Every now and then, S. K. Nair would disappear from Travancore. When he appeared again, he would say, 'When I was having tea with the Mikado of Japan,' or 'Sun Yat Sen told me confidentially at dinner,' and so on. Whether he actually met these personages or not, I did not know.

Lecturing was the sole means of S. K. Nair's livelihood. When he visited a town in Travancore, he would go to some high official with a shady reputation or a doubtful past and place before him a hundred tickets to be sold by him for the lecture at a rupee apiece. If he failed to sell the tickets, Nair would expose his infirmities mercilessly in the course of his lecture and the poor man would become the butt of the town. It must be admitted, however, that S. K. Nair made good use of the proceeds of his eloquence and ingenuity. He gave the best education to a gifted nephew of his, G. P. Sekhar, who, early in his life, had lost his father, G. P. Pillai, a staunch patriot and a distinguished journalist, whose wife was noted for her beauty in Madras as well as in Malabar.

G. P. Sekhar was also befriended by Eardley Norton, a brilliant English lawyer who had an extensive practice in Indian courts and was an intimate friend of Sekhar's parents. Such intimacy was rare in India and gave rise to gossip, for socially Englishmen kept themselves at a respectable distance from Indians. Madras, in those days, was a hotbed of orthodoxy. The caste system was in full vigour, and any departure, however innocent, from established conventions, especially on the part of a woman, was frowned upon.

In Madras, I came to know another family which also set tongues wagging. Dr Swaminathan, a brilliant Brahmin lawyer, married a non-Brahmin Nair girl, considerably younger than himself. He was immensely proud of Ammu and decided to turn her into a 'glass of fashion and mould of form' in the English style. She, whom Nature had abundantly endowed with grace, easily took on the veneer of Western culture. My brother knew her well and suggested that I should go and see her. I was not keen on doing so, for there was nothing in common between her and me. We moved in different worlds. I was a timid student and she was a shining society lady. However, my brother insisted; and I put on my only suit, bought a one-anna ticket by train and went to Chetput, and visited her in her house, Gilchrist Gardens. I was received by a butler in a long coat and turban, and a piece of paper was given to me on which I had to enter my name and business, which was nil. I was then ushered into a beautiful drawing-

room and kept waiting. A few minutes later, the fans started working and there was a patter of shoe-shod steps down the staircase. In a moment I stood face to face with a radiant woman and did not know what I should do or say. She tried her best to make me feel at home, but the more she tried the more uneasy I felt. I was greatly relieved when, half an hour later, a handsome man came in. He was introduced to me as Ethiraj, Barrister-at-Law. How easy and affable he was, and how smoothly and elegantly the conversation between him and her flowed! How I envied him! On a hint from Ammu he took me in his dog-cart, which he drove himself, and left me at my lodgings. I boasted to my lodgemates about my first glimpse of high society and concealed from them what an ordeal it had been to me.

Some thirty years passed before I set eyes again on Ammu Swaminathan or, as we now call her, Cheriamma or 'little mother'. During this period a great deal had happened to us both. I had somehow made a mark in the ICS and had just been appointed Agent-General for India in China. Dr Swaminathan had passed away leaving two girls, both of whom eventually attained all-India fame—one, Lakshmi, as the commandant of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in the Indian National Army under Subhas Chandra Bose, and the other, Mrinalini, as an accomplished dancer. Ethiraj, the man who had taken me on that dog-cart drive, had amassed a vast fortune, of which he gave away ten lakhs of rupees for a women's college in Madras. He, who for three decades had been regarded as the most eligible bachelor in Madras, was now playing the part of a devoted husband to his English wife, who suddenly descended on him—a forgotten relic of his student days in England. And Ammu Swaminathan had taken to politics and become a Member of Parliament, a doer of good works and an ideal member of goodwill delegations to countries as far away as Japan and Ethiopia.

In Madras I had my first real contact with Englishmen. The only Englishman in Kottayam was F. N. Askwith, Principal of the CMS College. With his twirling moustache and his formidable dog, which followed him even into the classrooms,

he kept perfect discipline in school. Once the Malayalam munshi, whose class was always pandemonium, went to Askwith and said that three boys had misbehaved: 'One is writing imposition, the other is standing on the bench and the third is in my pocket.' The munshi had in his pocket the name of the boy who had refused to write the imposition or stand on the bench. Askwith gave him a caning. On another occasion, a boy who stole his neighbour's penknife was given a caning in the presence of the whole school. In those days corporal punishment was not frowned upon.

Englishmen had great prestige in Travancore. However, respect for them was tempered with a certain amount of amusement. The people believed that Englishmen had tails. My father told us that once, when Hunt, an English Judge of the Travancore High Court, came to Kottayam on inspection duty, a Namboodri went round and round his chair looking for his tail. There was a convincing story as to the origin of the Englishman's tail. When Hanuman, the leader of the monkey horde that helped Rama against Ravana, was flying from India to Ceylon in search of Sita, a beautiful nymph came from the opposite direction, and he was seized with desire for her. But his devotion to duty triumphed over his passion. However, he had an involuntary emission which fell into the sea and was swallowed by a fish; the fish swam a long, long way and laid its eggs on an island in the north. Englishmen are its descendants.

In Madras there were far more Englishmen than in Travancore. Those whom we came to know were all professors of the Madras Christian College. This college had been founded by Dr William Miller, who was its principal for many years, and it was still popularly known as Miller School. All the fifteen professors of the college were Englishmen. An Indian, J. B. Raju, was taken on as professor during my last year in Madras and this was regarded as a bold and liberal step. He was an eloquent speaker, but I felt that there was something glib about his rhetoric. The subject of his favourite lecture was 'Twelve Proofs of the Existence of God'. When I went to Oxford I heard a curious story about Raju, who had been there a few years earlier. There, too, he had a

reputation as an eloquent speaker and he showed much interest in missionary activities. Once he was found in the company of a girl who was in the proctor's black book. Asked for an explanation, Raju said, 'Why, Sir, I was trying to turn this girl to the path of righteousness.' The proctor asked him to pay a little more attention to his studies and a little less attention to the conversion of souls.

The English professors of the Christian College were distinguished men. Among them were Corley, a brilliant hunchback who used to be at St John's, Oxford, and came to Madras in search of sunshine; Macphail, professor of history, who had a fund of anecdotes and repeated them year after year; Macartney, who was half blind and seemed inspired when he taught English poetry; Pittendrigh, who was so tender-hearted that we called him grandmother Pittendrigh; and Meston, brother of the Governor of the U.P., who used to be called in to enforce discipline when Pittendrigh's classes were in chaos. The greatest of them was the Principal, Dr Skinner. A man of lofty ideals, he impressed his personality on his students and was at once respected, feared and loved by them. He used to ask his students by turn to his house in Egmore to have tea with him. Once, when we found that the tea was too hot, we poured it into the saucer to cool it. Mrs Skinner told us ever so gently that it was not proper to do so and reminded us of the proverb, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.' A cheeky boy told her that after all this was India; why should she not do as the Indians did? He did not have the last word; Mrs Skinner said that in an Indian home she would do as the Indians did.

The professors of the Christian College were all honourable men. We had, however, a strange experience with a couple in another Christian mission. The Rev. F. W. Henderson and his wife used to keep open house to the students round about and let them play tennis on their courts. My lodgemates and I took full advantage of their kindness. We felt perfectly at home with them and appreciated the daily tennis and the weekly cup of tea which Mrs Henderson gave us. One day, Henderson suggested that we might have a group photograph taken, and we gladly agreed. A few months later, we saw

our photograph in a transatlantic magazine, with the caption, 'The latest disciples of the Lord'. That night we had a heated discussion in our lodge. Some of my friends urged that we should never set foot again in the Hendersons' home, as the photo was a deliberate piece of deception, because we were all Hindus and not disciples of the Lord. Others asked, where else could we get such nice courts to play on, and that, free of charge? Some others said that after all Henderson had to resort to this subterfuge and show that he had made some converts in order to get money to run his house and the tennis-courts. One of my lodgemates pointed at me and asked whether there was any truer disciple of the Lord than myself, because I invariably got the first prize in the Bible examination. Finally, it was resolved that a small deputation should go to Henderson and convey our feeling of surprise at the publication of our photo with a mendacious caption. Henderson professed equal surprise; he said that he had sent the photo to the magazine in question, but denied that he was responsible for the caption, which must have been inserted by the editor; and he offered to write to the editor and demand an apology. The apology never came, but we continued to play tennis on Henderson's courts and enjoyed the hospitality of Mrs Henderson who, after this incident, added a slice of cake to her Saturday cup of tea.

Madras was full of colleges, but the Christian College was the best. So, at any rate, we thought. The Presidency College, run by the Government, was better situated, its professors were better paid, and its students were better dressed. But we felt that it simply turned out snobs. On the other hand, Loyola College, which was to appear in Madras a few years later, simply specialized in the art of making students get a first class. Later I realized how hasty and uncharitable such judgements were. I came into contact with Dr Jerome K. De Souza, the Principal of Loyola College. A Jesuit priest, he did not have even a trace of that religious intolerance which students of certain periods of European history have associated with the Jesuit order. A Roman Catholic, he was more Indian than Catholic, and his patriotism was as fervent as his Catholicism. When I was Foreign Secretary to the Government

of India, we included him more than once in our delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations. He was a most effective spokesman of the Government of India, and his views on such matters as Goa and Pondicherry and our relations with Portugal carried great weight, especially with the representatives of South American states. He was a man of great erudition, but learning sat lightly on him, and he did not scorn the gentle flippancies of life. In 1948, when he attended the session of the General Assembly in Paris, a French newspaper wrote that by far the most impressive member of the Indian delegation was a tall and handsome Roman Catholic priest who could often be seen in the lobbies of the United Nations with a glass in one hand and a girl on the other. How far Dr De Souza has left the stamp of his genial personality on Loyola College, I do not know. As for my own college, it still bears the mark of its great Principals, Miller, Skinner and Boyd.

The Christian College paid greater attention to social and extra-curricular activities than any other institution in Madras. It encouraged the formation of debating societies and study circles. It also arranged elocution competitions from time to time. I appeared at one of these competitions. The subject was 'The Child is Father of the Man'. We were given two hours to think out a talk lasting fifteen minutes. Much to my surprise I obtained the first prize, though all the other competitors were senior to me. I can only attribute it to the fact that a rather puerile joke which I cracked appealed to the sense of humour of Pittendrigh, who was the judge at the competition. Developing the argument that the habits, formed in childhood, continued to the end of one's life, I said that 'a boy who took to such evil habits as smoking would end up in the Bay of Whisky'. Pittendrigh was no stranger to this Bay and could therefore appreciate its terrors.

Our acquaintance with the professors of the Christian College confirmed all our predilections in favour of Englishmen. The legend of Victoria the Good coloured our attitude towards Great Britain. We regarded the British Empire, on which the sun never set, as a beneficent phenomenon; and the British

men and women whom we had so far met seemed wholly admirable. Gradually, however, we began to feel that there were too many Britishers about. They did not travel in trams or buses as we did. Every morning, at 9.30, we would wait at the junction of Poonamallee High Road and Naval Hospital Road in order to take a tram to the Christian College. Hundreds of luxurious cars and horse-drawn carriages would pass us and the occupants were mostly Englishmen. When I spent my vacation with Gopi Chettan in Madurai, I noticed that all the district officers—the District Collector, the District and Sessions Judge, the District Superintendent of Police and the Executive Engineer—were Englishmen. What fine bungalows they lived in! And what a host of liveried servants they had! We read in the newspapers that in the army, too, there was discrimination against Indians. Indians could not get the King's Commission, but only an inferior variety, called the Viceroy's Commission. Even in missionary institutions, Indians generally held lower appointments. In the Madras Christian College, all the professors except one were English; all the lecturers and tutors were Indian. Subconsciously we felt that there was something wrong in all this.

The person who made us conscious of it was herself an Englishwoman, Mrs Annie Besant. She was a powerful orator; and it was a treat to listen to her. It was she who first roused our minds to the anomaly of British rule in India. Her method was simple. She would paint a glowing picture of our ancient glories. India, she would point out, already had a splendid civilization when primitive tribes such as the Franks, the Huns, the Slavs, the Goths, the Magyars, the Angles and the Saxons were roaming about Europe, warring with one another. Then she would dwell on the present state of India, poor, ignorant, ridden by disease and superstition. And she would assert that there was no hope of eradicating these evils unless India was administered by Indians themselves. More impressive than what she said was her manner of saying it. She would begin quietly, with her arms folded in front, and gradually warm up, and when she reached the climax of her argument, her whole being would shake with emotion, her hair, which had been neatly combed, would stand on end,

and she would look like one possessed, sweeping us off our feet. And we would return to our hostel with the feeling that somehow we had been lifted out of ourselves.

Mrs Besant was our political idol. Before long, certain incidents happened which tarnished her lustre. The father of a Brahmin boy brought a case in the High Court of Madras against one Leadbeater, a disciple of Mrs Besant, charging him with having taught his son to practise masturbation. I always had a distrust of the mumbo-jumbo of the Theosophical Society, of which Mrs Besant was the head, and the Leadbeater case confirmed my dislike.

In spite of this case, Mrs Besant continued to dominate the political life of Madras. But soon there appeared a formidable opponent, Dr T. M. Nair. He too was a striking personality and an effective speaker. He did not have Mrs Besant's gift of sky-soaring, soul-stirring eloquence, but his speeches were even more delightful to listen to, because they were spiced with humour. He was one of the founders of the Non-Brahmin movement in Madras. His enemy No. 1 was the Brahmin, but he did not spare the Englishman either. Once he exclaimed, 'Scratch a European and you will find a barbarian.' On another occasion, when a professor of philology was brought out from England, Dr Nair protested against the appointment as a sheer waste of money, and when the Government spokesman tried to justify it, said, 'If that is all the justification the Government has to offer, either the science is a fraud or the professor is an impostor.' Sometimes he was downright vulgar. At a public meeting he described Mrs Besant as 'a woman of deep penetration, quick conception and easy delivery'. By his devastating wit and humour, irony and sarcasm, invective and innuendo, Dr Nair debunked Mrs Besant in the eyes of the people.

Naturally, the Brahmins disliked him intensely. The predominant position which they had occupied so far in the province was imperilled. Their fears increased when, in the winter of 1918, Dr Nair undertook a trip to England in order to obtain British support for the Non-Brahmin movement. The Non-Brahmin newspaper, *Justice*, reported that the Brahmins of Mylapore offered coconuts in the temples so that Dr Nair

might never return to India. If they did, their prayers were answered; Dr Nair caught pneumonia in England and died. At that time I was at Oxford. I went up to London and was one of the few Indian mourners, mostly students, who, on a cold wintry morning, saw his bulky body being consigned to the flames in Golders Green.

However much I admired Dr Nair's courage and enjoyed his eloquence, my sympathies were with the movement inaugurated by Mrs Besant. Madras used to be called the benighted province by sister provinces such as Bengal, where the spirit of nationalism was already rampant. It was Mrs Besant who roused Madras from its torpor.

I attended the session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Madras in December 1914. That was the only session of the Congress that I have ever attended, as once I joined the ICS I had to keep aloof from politics. I even paid Rs. 10 out of my meagre monthly allowance of Rs. 30 and became a Congress volunteer. Sir Bhupendranath Basu presided at that session. There was the usual torrent of speeches. The flow of oratory was suddenly interrupted by an unusual event. Someone had been making a speech, when a clapping started at the back of the hall. The entire audience started clapping their hands and I joined in, not knowing what it was for. Then I found myself standing, together with everyone else. We saw a thin figure, perfectly dressed, walking up to the platform with his ADCs and being received with the highest respect by the President of the Congress. It was Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras. Surendranath Banerjea, the orator of the Congress, was called upon to move a resolution affirming the loyalty of India to the British Crown. The whole incident showed the spirit of the Congress at that time. The Congress had not yet become an implacable opponent of foreign rule; it was a meek but dignified suppliant for increased self-government. Mahatma Gandhi had only just returned from South Africa and Jawaharlal Nehru was still at Cambridge.

The Governor's visit was meant as a special gesture of goodwill to the Indian nation. There was a reason for this gesture. The war was on. India had been making a vital

contribution to victory and Indian soldiers had been fighting magnificently on all fronts. It was, therefore, in the interests of Great Britain to have India firmly on her side. Moreover, the war had generated a spirit of idealism, and there were many people in Great Britain as well as in India who felt that it was high time a substantial response was made to the demands of Indian nationalism.

I attended a meeting in Madras in connexion with the first anniversary of the war. The Governor presided, and Sir Sankaran Nair was to have been the principal speaker. He had just been appointed Member of the Viceroy's Council but had not yet taken over. He turned up for the meeting at the appointed time, and a Eurasian sergeant asked him for his pass. Sir Sankaran announced his identity and said that no pass had been sent to him. The sergeant said that he could not admit anyone without a pass. Thereupon Sir Sankaran got into his car and went back to his house. He had undressed and was about to have an oil bath when the ADC to the Governor came to his house, apologized for the incident and pressed him to return. Sir Sankaran said that he was sorry he could not now go back; and the meeting was held without him. This incident created a sensation and the press took up the matter. Evidently, there was some flaw in the arrangements, but the newspapers treated it as a deliberate rebuff to an Indian. They observed that while Sir Sankaran was not admitted because he did not have a pass, dozens of Englishmen went in without having been asked to show one.

Sir Sankaran Nair was the third Indian to be appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council. When Lord Morley made a proposal, for the first time, to appoint an Indian to the Council, King Edward VII is said to have exclaimed, 'What! A member of a polygamous tribe in my Council!' The first Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council was Sir S. P. Sinha, subsequently Lord Sinha, the only Indian to have been raised to the peerage. He was also the first Indian to be appointed Governor of a province—an experiment which was not repeated until 1946, when the British empire in India was on its last legs. He was succeeded by Sir Ali Imam. Both had been law members, but Sir Sankaran was placed in charge

of an omnibus department called Education, Health and Lands, with a number of European heads of departments under him, then a novelty.

It was the policy of the British Government to try and detach men of ability and patriotism from the Congress and harness them to the Government. Sir Sankaran had been president of the Indian National Congress in 1897. In those days, the Congress was a somewhat aristocratic body. It did not fully appreciate the needs of the masses; still less did it recognize their potentialities in the struggle for freedom. But now there appeared on the Indian political scene a man who identified himself with the masses and mobilized their energies for the emancipation of the country. I saw him and heard him in Madras in 1916. The meeting which Mahatma Gandhi addressed was different from any other I had attended. It was not held in a hall such as the YMCA or the YMIA; it was held in the open, in the courtyard of the Christian College. Every doorway, every window, every branch of a tree, was occupied. There was an air of tense expectation, for the lecturer had already become a legend as a result of his struggle against entrenched racialism in South Africa. He arrived, looking small, thin, almost emaciated. He was dressed simply but elegantly; he had not yet adopted the dress—or the undress —of the Indian peasant, the loin-cloth. He spoke for exactly an hour. His speech, too, was unlike any other I had heard. There were no tricks of oratory, no purple patches, no barbs of satire. It was not an eloquent speech; it lacked even emphasis. It simply flowed. It flowed like the Rani in the Gersoppa waterfalls. These falls, the highest in Asia, are formed of four different streams, called the Raja, the Rani, the Roarer and the Rocket. The Raja flows majestically and voluminously and a little pompously. The Rani flows gently, smoothly, gracefully and yet purposefully. The Roarer issues, making a terrific sound, out of a crevice; and the Rocket flows in a series of jets. I had heard many an Indian speaker who could be called the Roarer or the Rocket, and some like Surendranath Banerjea were like the Raja. But

Mahatma Gandhi's speech was like the Rani; it was a simple effusion of truth and, therefore, of beauty.

After hearing Mahatma Gandhi we went home, our minds filled with the sheer beauty of his speech and manner. We did not then realize the significance of his advent in Indian politics. Soon he would introduce a new concept, *Purna Swaraj* or full independence. Even Mrs Besant thought he was going too far; her vision did not penetrate beyond home rule or dominion status. But here was an adventurous navigator, bent on steering India beyond the straits of Home Rule and the gulf of Dominion Status into the swelling sea of Independence. With the coming of Mahatma Gandhi, Mrs Besant became a back number which still strove to be in the forefront—a waning star, vying in vain with the rising sun.

3

OXFORD

I TOOK my degree from the Madras University in 1918. Again, there was a family council as to where I should next go. Gopi Chettan was all for sending me to Oxford, and my mother was not in a mood to oppose him. We had lost our father a few months previously, and Gopi Chettan was, to all intents and purposes, father to us now. My mother therefore let him have his way, though she was extremely worried, because the war was on and she had heard that the Germans had been dropping bombs on London.

The German submarine campaign was at its height, and few boats were allowed to go through the Mediterranean. We therefore had to go all round the Cape of Good Hope in a Japanese ship, *Mishima Maru*. The voyage took 65 days; we left Colombo in the middle of August and reached London at the end of October.

Delagoa Bay, the first port which we reached, was a pleasant spot. I cannot say the same of Cape Town, where we stopped next. All the passengers in the boat were allowed to land in Cape Town except Indians. We were about half a dozen and were detained on board for a couple of hours, apparently simply for the pleasure of detaining us and to show that we were a lower order of creation. This was also brought home to us after we had been allowed to land. At every few yards we were asked to produce our passports. We tried to go into a restaurant but, no! it was reserved for Europeans! We tried to go into a cinema and actually bought the tickets. The tickets were bought by Inamurrahim, who had a fair complexion and could pass for a South European, but when an official saw us following him, he brusquely stopped us and turned us out. He refused to return the money we had paid for the tickets, saying we should have known better. We left Cape Town utterly humiliated and with anger in our hearts not merely against the South African Government but against the British Empire.

We sailed northwards along the west coast of Africa and stopped at Sierra Leone. Thence all boats had to go in convoy to England. The last convoy had left an hour before we reached Sierra Leone. There, in that 'white man's grave', we had to remain on board for ten days, sleeping behind mosquito curtains, taking quinine, and unable to go ashore because yellow fever had been raging. At last a convoy was ready and we left Sierra Leone in the middle of October. The German U-boats were unusually active in the Irish Sea; when we were there we heard that three other boats had been torpedoed, the *Galway Castle*, *Leinster* and *Hirana Maru*, the sister ship of the one in which we had been travelling. Great was our relief when at last we landed in Liverpool. In London, we stayed at 21 Cromwell Road, a Government hostel, run mainly for newly arrived Indians. Miss Beck, who was in charge of the hostel, put us in the way of things. A nice old lady, we thought, but other Indians whispered in our ears that she was a spy of the India Office. In those days, Indians in England developed peculiar complexes; the free air of England made them suspect all Anglo-Indian officials, and the India Office was in their eyes a sinister institution.

In London, we learnt that I would be admitted to Christ Church and G. K. Chettur to New College. Chettur had been with me in the Christian College and travelled with me to London on the *Mishima Maru*. We arrived at Oxford on a cold foggy evening. The railway station was deserted, and it was with difficulty that we found a cab to take us to the King's Arms Hotel, where we spent the night. Our first view of Oxford was far from impressive. An old, drunken coachman drove us through squalid lanes, full of butchers' shops and breweries. The streets were forlorn and empty and the lights were shrouded, lest some German bomber should spot the city from above. Occasionally, an old man, half-drunk, could be seen loitering along, singing wearily to himself; occasionally, a maimed soldier with his arms round an ungainly woman's waist. Then we entered a fine broad street, the magnificence of which merely accentuated our sense of desolation. Soldiers and old men again—maimed, half-drunk, mournful. The

next morning, we found that the colleges too were deserted. All able-bodied men had gone off to fight. The tutors were old and the students were invalids or foreigners. Many college buildings were occupied by army recruits. A university which in normal times could boast of 4,000 undergraduates now had barely a tenth of that number. My own college, the largest at Oxford, had 40 undergraduates against the normal 400.

On the day after our arrival, I was taken to see our Dean, Thomas Strong. I was charmed by him. He told me that he knew Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and that he sympathized with his plans for Indian self-government. The Dean was known to be an expert in three things, theology, music and claret. There was a cartoon showing him as a butler pouring out tea; and underneath were the words, 'Do you like your T(ea) Strong?' He was certainly popular, unlike his famous predecessor Dr Fell. Shortly before I left Oxford, Dean Strong was appointed Bishop of Ripon and subsequently he returned as Bishop of Oxford. In 1934, I called on him at Cuddesdon. Though frail, he was his old, gracious self.

Our Senior Censor's name was Owen. One day I had to write a letter to him and asked an undergraduate what his initials were. He told me D.T., so I addressed my letter accordingly. Owen called me up the next day and barked, 'Can't you check my initials before writing to me?' I subsequently learnt that his initials were S.G. and D.T. was the version substituted as a sort of nickname by the undergraduates: it meant *delirium tremens*, from which he was supposed to be suffering because of his devotion, as a distinguished classical scholar and an epicurean, to the Greek god Bacchus.

I had to take a preliminary examination called History Previous before doing History Honours. Arthur Hassall was my first tutor. He was a prolific historian, and when I met him he was engaged on his forty-third book. The first essay which he set for me had something to do with the Reformation in England. On 11 November at 11.00 a.m., when I was reading out my essay to him, Great Tom began to ring—it had not rung for the four years of war—and Hassall rushed out of the room crying, 'Peace has come.'

When the second world war ended, someone said that peace had broken out. At the end of the first world war we really thought that peace had come, at least for our generation. In our simplicity we believed in the politicians' slogans such as 'a war to end war', 'a war to make the world safe for democracy'. On 11 November 1918 there was great rejoicing at Oxford. Even the age-old distinction between Town and Gown was forgotten, and both intermingled in the revels of the night. At the same time each college had its individual celebration. We had a great Victory Dinner, when for the first time in my life I had a glass of wine. This was followed by a bonfire in Peckwater quadrangle, which we fed with bits of furniture, old clothes and our new gowns. 'These gowns,' said Dean Strong, 'will produce a plentiful crop of gowns next term.' So they did. The number of undergraduates shot up from 400 to 4,000.

In April 1919 I passed my History Previous with distinction. Hassall told me that I was getting a little too good for him and that he would pass me on to younger and abler hands. Keith Feiling and J. C. Masterman were my tutors for the rest of my time at Oxford. Feiling was a Tory and the historian of the Tory Party and Masterman was a Liberal. No one could have been kinder to me or more stimulating. They somehow spotted that I had potentialities for getting a First and set about shaping me to that end. I am glad I did not disappoint them.

I also strove to acquire the superficial airs and graces of an Oxford man. I discarded my suits and took them out only when I went to London for three days every term to eat my Bar dinners. I wore nothing but grey flannels and a tweed coat and I shunned hats. I began attending lectures as religiously as I had done in India, but soon I learnt that lectures were meant to be cut. They were for the weaker brethren and I flattered myself that I was a potential First. I also learnt that term time at Oxford was meant to be enjoyed and that summer time in particular was too glorious to be spent swotting, but I made up for it by spending the vacations in some quiet spot in Devonshire or in the Lake District and working hard.

I sedulously cultivated the Oxford slang, though not the Oxford accent. I developed a healthy contempt for women, for though women had just been admitted to Oxford, they were there on sufferance. This superior attitude enabled me to remain a virgin as long as I was at Oxford.

If I was proud of being an Oxford man, I was still more proud of being a House man. Christ Church, or in Latin *Aedes Christi*, the House of Christ, was generally known as the House. Merely to live in the House and breathe its atmosphere was an education. I loved every inch of the College: Tom Tower built by Sir Christopher Wren; Great Tom, which had been taken from Osney Abbey and which pealed a curfew of 101 strokes at 9.05 p.m.; Tom Quad with its Mercury fountain, where K. M. Panikkar was once ducked; Peckwater Quad, where I lived during my first three terms, and the Meadow Buildings where I spent the last three; the beautiful meadows of Christ Church, where I thought out my speeches for the Oxford Majlis and my poems to my sister-in-law; the lovely Tudor staircase leading to our dining-hall; the dining-hall itself, adorned with portraits by painters such as Reynolds and Gainsborough; and the great kitchen which gave rise to the taunt in the sixteenth century that Wolsey wanted to found a college and built a tavern. I became acquainted with all the traditions of the House. On my return to India I often spoke about my life at Oxford. A favourite peroration of mine was that in the sixteenth century Christ Church was built by Cardinal Wolsey; that in the seventeenth century, during the struggle between the Cavaliers and the Roundheads, it was the favourite abode of royalty; that in the eighteenth century, it produced Locke the philosopher and Wesley the Methodist; that in the nineteenth century it produced three Prime Ministers in succession, Gladstone, Rosebery and Salisbury; and that in the twentieth century it produced Anthony Eden, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, and myself!

In a sense, my pride in Oxford and Christ Church was impersonal. I made few English friends. In my time the undergraduates fell into two categories, those who came up directly from school and those who returned to Oxford from the

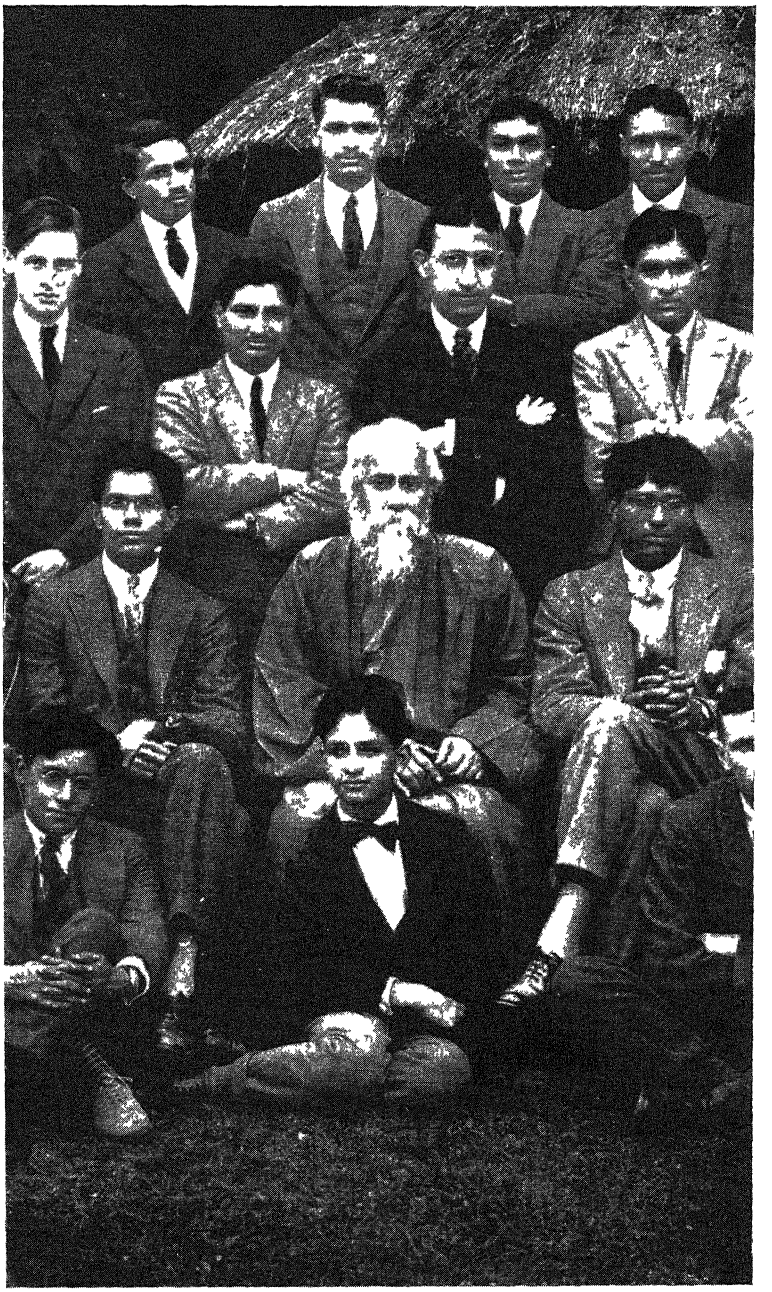
war. The former were younger than me and the latter were older; and when you are 20, a difference of two or three years either way makes all the difference. Moreover, the ex-servicemen were a steady, hard-working lot, not over-anxious to make friends. I was temperamentally shy and felt tongue-tied in the presence of my fellow-students in the JCR and elsewhere. The playground was the best place for making friends, but I was poor at games. I played a little tennis, which is hardly a companionable game anyhow, and I acquired sufficient proficiency in punting to get into the way of the Eights and be soundly sworn at by them. Perhaps the real handicap from which I and most Indian students suffered was that we had a certain complex, resulting from the unnatural relationship between Great Britain and India, the ruler and the ruled. Whether it was an inferiority complex or a superiority complex I do not know; perhaps it was an inferiority complex which, as it often does, took the form of a superiority complex. It was this which created an invisible barrier in the way of any real friendship between Indian and English undergraduates in those days.

During my first year at Oxford my thoughts were elsewhere. Dramatic events were taking place in India. The hopes entertained during the war, that India would move forward to self-government after the war, had a setback; the Government of India resorted to repression. The Rowlatt Act was passed in the teeth of public opinion; there were protests throughout the country and the Punjab was in revolt. Martial law was enforced; many ugly incidents took place, such as the ghastly massacre of Jalianwala Bagh and the notorious Crawling Order which, Churchill said, 'violated every canon of civilization'. It was in this setting that Mahatma Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement. At first the Government of India thought that this movement would soon die of its 'intrinsic inanity', but it spread like wildfire. The clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi to the people to non-cooperate with the Government and to boycott all British institutions, including courts, colleges and schools, was heard even in England. One of my contemporaries, A. K. Pillai,

was moved by this call; he sent a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi asking whether it also applied to the students in England. 'Yes,' came the reply. A. K. Pillai thereupon gave up his studies and returned to India. We gave him an affectionate farewell and made eloquent speeches in his honour and went back to our books. A. K. Pillai married a girl whose chief qualification was that she was the daughter of Ramakrishna Pillai, a man who had defied a high-handed Dewan of Travancore and been deported. However, he failed to make a mark in Indian politics. A few years later, he went back to England, qualified for the Bar, changed his allegiance from the Congress to the Socialist Party, and died young.

We were filled with indignation at the events in India and especially in the Punjab. We had a forum for letting off steam, the Oxford Majlis. This Indian association had produced a number of revolutionaries, some of whom were still roaming about in Europe. In the Majlis, we made vehement speeches which we thought patriotic and which the British thought seditious. At the same time, we went on studiously preparing for the ICS. The inconsistency between the making of anti-British speeches and the attempt to enter the ICS, which was the mainstay of the British Government in India, did not strike us. Honesty as well as modesty forbids me to plead, in the light of after events, the foreknowledge that by entering the ICS some of us would become better qualified to serve independent India than those who, carried off their feet by the noble call of patriotism, forsook their studies and entered the serious business of life without adequate preparation.

I was elected President of the Majlis in my third term and was proud to be addressed for the next three years as the Ex-President from Christ Church. I came to have a reputation as an elegant speaker, but when I look back on my speeches I feel somewhat ashamed of them. They lacked substance. I would sacrifice anything for a scintillating epigram or a telling anticlimax which would win the applause of the audience. During my term as President of the Majlis, Rabindranath Tagore visited Oxford. With his long beard, flowing robes and silvery voice, he looked like a being from another planet. He was the first Indian to have won the



With Tagore at Oxford in 1921. The author is on the poet's right and G. K. Chettur on the left. At Tagore's feet sits Muhammad Mujeeb, later to become principal of the Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi.

Nobel Prize in literature, but he had fallen from grace in British eyes as he renounced his knighthood in protest against the atrocities of the martial law regime in the Punjab. But now he was back in favour again. Compared to Gandhiji, who filled the country with a revolutionary spirit, Tagore seemed to the British almost moderate, and his catholicity assuaged the bitterness of nationalist struggles. The Majlis and the Oxford Union held a combined meeting in honour of Tagore; Hore-Belisha, as President of the Union, and I, as President of the Majlis, made speeches welcoming Tagore. I said that we welcomed him 'not merely as a poet, not merely as a patriot, not merely as a philosopher, but as an honorary member of the Oxford Majlis'. An Oxford audience could always be trusted to appreciate a light touch like this.

Lord Chelmsford, a former Viceroy of India, was once invited to address the Majlis. The subject was whether the measures taken by him as Viceroy were necessary and successful. They included the introduction of martial law in the Punjab. I was the chief speaker on the opposition side, and I began by offering a welcome to Lord Chelmsford thus: The Oxford Majlis would like to welcome him, I said, not merely as a former Viceroy of India but as an Oxford Blue and a Fellow of All Souls. A few weeks previously there had been a debate as to who was a greater asset to society, a Blue or a First? Two Blues spoke on behalf of the First and two Firsts on behalf of the Blue. 'Similarly,' I said, 'Lord Chelmsford will have to make two speeches today, first as a former Viceroy of India on the other side of the House, and then, on this side of the House, as a gentleman.' The House roared with laughter, in which Lord Chelmsford, too, joined.

During my first year at Oxford, G. K. Chettur was my inseparable companion. He had a brilliant career at Madras and got a First in English and was regarded as a certainty for the ICS. In England, however, he did not fulfil these expectations, because the Muse started stirring in him. He gave himself the airs of a poet. He grew his hair long, wore a cravat instead of a tie, rode a motor-cycle with both legs on one side and punted so stylishly that he fell into the Isis and was

rescued from drowning by another punt. When Rabindranath Tagore came to Oxford, Chettur submitted some poems for his approval. Tagore asked him to burn them all and to start rewriting in his mother-tongue.

As befitted a poet Chettur was susceptible to beauty. When Hansa Mehta visited Oxford, he lost his heart to her and only recovered it when, in response to his emotional query whether he was right in thinking that she cared more for him than for others, she asked, in a sentence of the same length and tone, why he should think that she cared more for him than for others. Nevertheless, when she left Oxford he saw her off at the railway station with a poem and a bouquet of flowers; and he was hurt when she wrote a letter from Geneva to me and not to him.

Once Chettur and I were staying in the Valley of the Rocks hotel in Lynton, Devonshire. There was a charming girl there whose attention he did his best to attract. Not succeeding, he adopted a ruse. He decided to address a letter to himself as His Highness the Raja of Mankara. He hoped that when all the inmates of the hotel assembled to pick up their letters this one would catch the girl's eye and that she would begin to take an interest in him. Chettur and I went to the nearest post office and posted the fateful letter. He told the manager of the hotel that letters would come to him as the Raja of Mankara, that though he was the Raja he was travelling incognito and that the manager should not return the letter on the ground that the addressee was unknown. The letter came; and the manager, anxious to respect the Raja's desire to remain incognito, put it into an outer cover addressed to Mr G. K. Chettur and sent it to him. Chettur saw in this the hand of Providence and gave up the chase.

Before long temperamental incompatibility forced Chettur and me apart. As a friend Chettur was too exacting. He had exaggerated ideas of friendship, derived from 'In Memoriam', from which he would recite chunks for my edification. He expected me to play Arthur Hallam to his Lord Tennyson. This was distasteful to me and I quietly but firmly moved away from him; and he too gave me up, almost pitying me for my inability to appreciate his genius.

Having separated from Chettur, I plunged into a veritable sea of friendship. I made scores of friends. My relations with them were free from that cloying sentimentality which had ruined my friendship with Chettur. Among my friends at Oxford may be mentioned D. S. Reddy, an uncut diamond, posing as a rake and yet innocent as a lamb; K. S. Shavaksha, who won his boxing blue at Oxford and all his life has been tilting at officialdom and pomposity; M. C. Chagla, sober (except in our company), sedate and studious; J. S. A. Raju, who went through life as though it was a huge joke and gave it up prematurely; A. N. Thampi, who played tennis for Christ Church, and joined me in publishing an article against the autocracy of the Maharaja of Travancore, despite the fact that he himself belonged to the royal family; P. N. Sapru, the most absent-minded and the most lovable of men, who, despite his absent-mindedness, rose to be a Judge of the High Court; T. C. Goswami, who owned a Rolls-Royce, entered politics under the wings of Motilal Nehru, married Lord Sinha's daughter, and flashed and faded like a meteor; Mohammad Habib, professor, delving into the twilight periods of Indian history and doing everyone else's work as well as his own in the Aligarh University; K. T. N. Menon, who used to be the most Bohemian among us at Oxford and is now the most sedate, having married an Englishwoman, accepted Christianity and settled down in England as a priest; Liaquat Ali Khan, a good sportsman and a good friend, who on his return to India was swept into the vortex of Muslim League politics, became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan and was assassinated by a Muslim in the prime of his career; S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike of Ceylon, who was temperamentally so different from Liaquat—for he was brilliant and ebullient—and yet who had an almost parallel political career, for he, too, was swept into the office of Prime Minister by a wave of ardent Sinhalese nationalism and fell a victim to the bullet of a Sinhalese fanatic; B. R. Sen, whose horse used to go well ahead of ours in the riding school at Oxford and whose official steed, too, has gone ahead, for he was thrice elected Director-General of FAO; and noblest of us all, Mohammad Mujeeb, scholar and writer, who has devoted his whole life to the National Muslim

University, lives austerely and yet does not scorn a strong drink or a risky joke in the company of his old friends.

As for Chettur, I met him but once after I returned to India from Oxford. During the ten years that had passed, he had greatly mellowed. The Muse, which had caused strange disturbances in his soul at Oxford, had left him, and his literary talent showed itself in prose rather than in poetry. When I met him he was the popular and respected principal of a college in Mangalore. He had written a book on Oxford called *The Last Enchantment* and had found happiness in his marriage with one of the most beautiful and accomplished girls in Malabar, to whom he wrote sonnets with the refrain, 'Chocha, Chocha, Chocha,' her pet name. But, alas, his happiness did not last long. He was stricken with cancer and died, hating death, before he was forty.

To Chettur I owe an unforgettable experience. When he was President of the Majlis, he invited W. B. Yeats to address us. That was the most beautiful lecture I have ever heard. Everything about it was beautiful—the style, the contents, the manner and the man. His subject was 'My generation in poetry'. One of his endeavours, he said, had been to bring the language of everyday life back into poetry. This was uphill work. Once, a performance of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* had caused a riot, and he had to fight off the rioters for hours, all because there was a mention of a girl's shift in it. Yeats spoke with affection of some young Indian poets he had known, such as Manmohan Ghose and Purohit Swami, and quoted their poems. After his lecture he answered a number of questions. The Majlis was a highly patriotic body and was impatient for a revolution in India. We were all fed on the French Revolution, and that, and not Mahatma Gandhi's new-fangled idea of a non-violent revolt, was our model. A senior Indian student, Abdurrahman Siddiqi, put a question, which was more a statement, asserting that India could obtain freedom only through violence. Then we saw a different Yeats. He was thoroughly roused by the mention of violence. He said that he hated violence with all his heart and all his soul and all his spirit's strength. He knew what violence meant: his own people, the Irish, had taken to it,

meeting the violence of the oppressor with their own violence. But to no purpose; the only outcome was the corruption of their soul. The whole of Europe was reeking with violence, and if it spread out to India, too, God save civilization! Here was the man who wrote these burning lines :

> Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
> Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
> Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
> To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
> The night can sweat with terror as before
> We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
> And planned to bring the world under a rule,
> Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.

One of the poems which Yeats recited in the course of his lecture rings in my ears still. That is Ernest Dowson's 'I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion'. Yeats personally knew the human originals of that lovely poetic triangle and recited it with intense feeling. To hear it was a vivid emotional experience.

I had no Cynara of my own in England, though some of my companions managed to have one or even two. Life at Oxford was too full, too rich, too exciting for me to seek idle flirtation or to crave animal satisfaction. Though we professed to lead a life of cultured idleness, we lived in an atmosphere of intellectual activity. I belonged to half a dozen clubs and was founder-member of one, the Nineteen Club. I read almost anything that came to hand. I spent many hours in the Bodleian and was considered good enough to have a card even for the library of All Souls. I attended few lectures. The only lectures to which I went regularly were those of Professor Adams, subsequently Warden of All Souls, whose subject was Representative Government. But neither Adams nor I knew that the time was coming when representative government would be in eclipse in a good part of Europe and that the Mother of Parliaments would look on wearily, when dictators in Germany and Italy crushed liberty in their own states and threatened the liberty of other nations; that after a decade

or two of indifference, the Mother would wake up suddenly and proceed against them and destroy them with the help of another state, which had already discarded representative government.

At Oxford, not only one's mind but one's body had plenty of exercise. I rode, punted and played tennis, all with greater zest than effect. I enjoyed punting. I hired a boat and called it *Sadhana*; Chettur called his wistfully *Hansa*. Some boats had delightful names. One was called *PTO* and another, *Sans Peur et Sans Chaperon*. Day after day, we would punt all the way to Slay's cafe and have an ice-cream and strawberries and listen to Slay's stories of his ancestors, among whom he reckoned Geoffrey Chaucer. I also learnt to ride. We had to take a riding test in the final ICS examination. This examination took place at Woolwich. After we had done the test, which included saddling and bridling, trotting, cantering and jumping, Capt. Barry, our examiner, told us, 'Gentlemen, you have all passed, and when you go back to India, I advise you to get motor-cycles!'

Our vacations were even more strenuous than the terms at Oxford, but in a different way. Then we caught up with the work left undone. At the same time, we explored the varied beauty of Britain's countryside. We spent a couple of vacations in Devonshire where the hills merged with the sea. We rode and walked on the moors of Devon, full of memories of a favourite book of mine, *Lorna Doone*. We spent another vacation in Dyffryn in North Wales in a quaint house which we pronounced Cood-i-bahau, but the spelling of which I have forgotten. While Reddy, Raju, Mujeeb and I worked for Schools, Hamid fell in love with a blacksmith's daughter and wrote poems to her. We visited the Scottish, as well as the English, Lake District and enjoyed the rugged grandeur of the former as well as the peace and quiet of the latter. We climbed Skiddaw, Helvellyn and Ben Lomond. Helvellyn was the most difficult of the three. On reaching the top, I felt a little dizzy. My companions, Chettur and Raju, had gone ahead of me and were not within sight. I, afraid to go forward or back, slid down the mountain-side almost into the lake below, and, after having been nearly gored by a bull,

got back to our hotel an hour or two after my friends had returned. I found them most anxious; Chettur had just composed a telegram for my brother and a poem in my memory.

I was then 23 and still a stranger to women. When three of us at Oxford went to Edinburgh, an Indian, who had been there for many years and seemed to keep a regular harem, introduced us to three of his girl friends and insisted on our going for a walk with them in different directions. The one I went with was highly ingratiating, but I did not know what to do with her. I still remember the look of scorn on the face of our host when we returned and the girl told him 'Nothing doing'. I must confess, however, that before leaving Europe I, together with some of my companions, tasted the forbidden fruit, which was on display in the markets of the Continent, and found it far from satisfying, and in retrospect, disgusting.

I took History Honours in June, 1921. After the written papers, I appeared for the usual *viva voce* examination. The viva is meant to pull you up, not to pull you down. If the viva was short, it meant that the examiner had made up his mind, on the basis of the written test, whether you should pass or fail and in which class you should be placed. If the viva took long, it meant that you were a marginal case. My own viva lasted less than a minute. The Chief Examiner told me that I had attained a very high standard in all the papers and brought credit to the College and the University. I was dazed to hear this, for it meant that I had got the most coveted of all distinctions, a First at Oxford. The blood rushed to my head and all afternoon I had a headache. No such consequences followed when, a few weeks later, I saw my name at the top of the list of successful candidates in the combined examination for the Indian Civil Service, the Home Civil Service and the Colonial Civil Service.

The examination was spread out over the whole of August. The first paper was Essay-writing, in which I scored 75 per cent. The last was Political Science, my favourite subject, in which I got 91 per cent. When I asked for more paper, and still more paper, to answer the questions, the supervisor of

the examination, a kindly old man, playfully felt the weight of my answer-book and said, 'Shall we now send it to the press?'

The written examination was followed by a personality test, conducted by a board of five, including a lady. I remember only two of the examiners, Professor Ramsay Muir and Dr Lindsay, who was to become Master of Balliol. In order to put me at ease, they began by asking me questions about my home and antecedents. Knowing that I came from Travancore, they said, 'So you come from a Native State?' 'Or, rather,' I said, 'from an Indian State.' We then discussed how the innocent word 'native' had come to acquire a derogatory significance and whether the inferiority complex of the 'natives' was not as much responsible for it as the superiority complex of those who bore the white man's burden. I was then asked about the Maharaja of Travancore. I said that he was an estimable ruler and was regarded almost as a saint, but there were complaints that he had one or two corrupt favourites. 'Is it better to have one or two favourites?,' they asked. I said that from the point of view of the people, two favourites were better than one, because one could be played off against the other. The examiners nodded approval. Then, knowing that I belonged to the Nair community, they asked me a number of questions about the origin and nature of the matrilineal system. Gradually they led me on to higher ground. One of their questions was how I would distinguish the Irish problem, which was then very much in the limelight, from the Indian problem. I said that for Great Britain, Ireland was essentially a domestic problem, but India was an imperial problem. Whether de Valera would have agreed with me I doubt, but the examiners seemed to like my answer. On the whole, the personality test was a most pleasant experience for me. Forty years later, when I was on the Board of Interview year after year for selecting candidates for the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Foreign Service, I always kept in mind, as a model, my own interview for the ICS in 1921.

I was having a holiday in Ilfracombe, Devonshire, when the results of the examination were published. When I saw that I stood first, I was greatly elated, but also vaguely depressed. After a First at Oxford, it was almost an anticlimax

to stand first in the ICS. I received a number of congratulatory telegrams. One telegram, however, said, 'Sorry for you.' I was a little sorry for myself. Despite the glamour of the ICS, was I not going to serve a foreign government in my own country? But such tormenting thoughts I kept to myself.

Even after having passed the ICS examination I kept on making vehement speeches against British rule in India. The illogicality of my position was brought home to me by a summons from the India Office. An official received me, and when I asked him what I had been summoned for he said, 'Wait and see.' He led me through a long and dim corridor into a room where two Members of the Secretary of State's Council were present. The senior of the two read extracts from the *Indus*, a magazine then published in England, in which it was stated that Mr K. P. S. Menon had made a speech arguing that India could not long remain in the British Empire. If that was my conviction, said he, it was inconsistent with my Covenant as a Member of the ICS, the first clause of which stipulated that I would remain loyal to King George V and his heirs and successors for ever. I replied that I had drawn a distinction between the Empire and the Commonwealth. India could not remain in her present position in the Empire but might remain as an equal member of the Commonwealth. 'So you were unfortunate in your reporters,' he said. 'You may sign the Covenant.'

A month later, I sailed from London for India. On my way to Tilbury, I had an unexpected experience. An Indian girl, with whom I had been friendly but no more, suddenly whispered in my ear, 'Who will wipe my tears, K.P.S., when you are gone?' I was completely taken aback. If she had said this a day earlier, I might have proposed to her, not because I loved her but because I liked her and would have hated to be even the involuntary cause of her misery. Twenty-five years passed before I met her again. She had grown into a buxom woman, was still unmarried, and had made a mark in the medical profession.

Four years and four months after I arrived in England, I left Oxford, feeling that the best part of my life lay behind me.

4

TRICHINOPOLY

MY BROTHER and sister-in-law met me in Bombay and took me under their wing. They regarded me as their creation, which indeed I was. But for my brother's generosity, I would never have been able to go to England and enter the ICS; and any other sister-in-law would have resented her husband spending so much money on a brother, more in fact than on his own children. But the relations between her and me were not those of a brother-in-law and a sister-in-law. We had been playmates, classmates, room-mates and, except in a sensual sense, sweethearts.

After spending a couple of days in Bombay we travelled by train to Madras. My brother and sister-in-law, Kudva (a fellow member of the ICS) and myself were in the same compartment. About midnight some rowdy British soldiers entered our compartment. They were evidently drunk; they fumbled for the light and could not find it. They then felt someone sleeping on a berth and started shouting, 'Fuck him out!' Kudva tried to raise his voice but it did not rise. Suddenly I heard my brother putting on his best English accent and saying, 'Shut up, you fools! Don't wake up Brigadier MacCormick.' The mention of the word Brigadier was enough; the Tommies became silent and crept quietly out of the compartment at the next station. I admired my brother's presence of mind and resourcefulness which prevented an ugly scuffle with drunken soldiers.

During the next few weeks, however, my admiration for Gopi Chettan was mixed with a certain amount of irritation. He took me from place to place and showed me to his friends as a prize exhibit. His friends formed a motley crowd. As befitted a criminal lawyer he cast his net far and wide; among his friends were princes and professors, priests and prostitutes, missionaries, and murderers who owed their lives to his forensic skill. What was strange to me, he seemed to be equally at

home with them all—and they with him. I was obliged to accompany him to their houses and to enjoy—or suffer—their hospitality, and listen sometimes to their sickening flattery, sometimes to their obscene jokes, and pretend that I, too, like my brother, was hail-fellow-well-met with everyone.

A new entrant to the ICS had the right to express his preference as to the province in which he would like to serve. Normally, he would spend his entire service in that province, unless he was taken to the Central Secretariat or appointed to some Central Department like Customs, or the Foreign and Political Department. I put Bihar down as the province of my choice. It was a comparatively new province, which had been carved out of Bengal, and I thought that it offered interesting possibilities, but my real reason was that I wanted to escape the ubiquitous embrace of Gopi Chettan's friends. But he was cleverer than me. He approached no less a personage than the Governor of Madras, Lord Willingdon, with the request that I should be posted to Madras. My brother was a Member of the Madras Legislative Council and Lord Willingdon was an adept at giving sops to legislators to keep them quiet. So he wired to the Secretary of State, and I found myself posted to the Madras Presidency. Subsequently, Gopi Chettan approached Lord Willingdon with an even stranger request that I should be posted to a district as near his own as possible. Again, Lord Willingdon was ready to oblige, and I was posted as Assistant Collector in Trichinopoly, next door to Madurai. Thus I could not escape my brother; nor frankly, did I want to escape him, for I was genuinely fond of him. It was only his friends I was afraid of. They included saints as well as sinners. Whether I was more afraid of the saints or the sinners, I do not know.

Before I took up my appointment in Trichinopoly, I was allowed a fortnight's casual leave. I divided this period equally between my brother in Madurai and my mother in Kottayam. I had a fantastic reception on my arrival in Madurai. Gopi Chettan's friends from all strata of society assembled in full strength at the railway station; and with drums beating, conches blowing and music playing, they took me in a decorated car through the streets of Madurai with the crowds gaping on

me as if I was a bridegroom. I felt ashamed of myself but I did not have the heart to betray my feelings lest my brother should feel hurt.

I spent a week in Kottayam with my mother. Kottayam had changed. I felt that life had lost its old grace, poise and balance. Mammon had invaded the town. The people of Kottayam, or at least a section of it, had waxed rich and prosperous. This was the result of the discovery that the High Range not far away was ideal for the cultivation of rubber. The man who made this discovery was Palampadam Thomas. He was a lawyer like my father but he left law for land and started clearing the wild, mosquito-ridden, elephant-infested jungles of Peermade and Mundakayam in order to plant rubber. Others followed suit. The price of rubber shot up during the First World War. Men who had belonged to the lower middle classes suddenly found themselves rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Palampadam himself retained his homely simplicity to the end of his life, but money turned the heads of others. They were no longer content to go about in a horse-cart or bullock-cart; they went in for motor-cars. In my childhood, there was not a single car in Kottayam and only one in Trivandrum, and that belonged to the British Resident. Toddy and arrack no longer satisfied the planters; they took to whisky and brandy. Foreign liquor shops began to be established in Kottayam and, as a corollary, foreign medicine shops. A hitherto unknown drug, called aspirin, began to be sold to soothe men's nerves; and Ramankunju Kaniyar promptly pronounced it poison.

The scramble for rubber was confined to the Syrian Christian community. The Nairs looked on with lordly disdain. Their own community, however, was caught up in the vortex of change. Adventurous young men went out of Kerala in large numbers to seek a livelihood elsewhere; and the joint-family system began to crack up. The matriarchal system, too, became an anachronism. The perennial rivalry between the wife and the sister assumed new dimensions and eventually ended in favour of the wife. The aristocratic airs of the Nairs no longer made any impression on other communities. The Christian *nouveaux riches*, who did not have the humility and

resignation which characterized the Christian teachers of the CMS School, saw no reason why they should accept an invitation to dine in a Nair house if they had to have their meals on the veranda and not in the dining-room. To keep pace with other enterprising communities, the Nairs too began to organize themselves. They founded the Nair Service Society under the redoubtable leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan. Now approaching 90, he has come to be called 'Bharata Kesari', the Lion of India, because it was under his banner that not only Nairs but Christians, and members of all the other communities who were dissatisfied with the Communist government in Kerala, rose against it in 1959 and had it ousted.

The discovery of rubber had another effect: it increased the disparity between riches and poverty. The rich flaunted their riches and the poor hated their poverty. The law of karma ceased to be an opiate of the people. Even the 'untouchables' began to raise their voice. The old code of manners had been undermined, and a new one had not taken its place. In this atmosphere of restlessness women began to cover their breasts, at first in towns and afterwards even in villages. Kerala had lost its innocence.

Nevertheless I enjoyed my stay in Kottayam. I would have liked to spend every minute of it by my mother's side, sitting on her swinging cot and rubbing her ageing legs, talking to her and hearing her talk, for her talk was music in my ears. But I was not allowed to do so. As an 'England-returned man' and an ICS I was a novelty. I had to be on exhibition from morning to evening. The people were surprised to see that I dressed like them and did not go about in trousers, as my brother had done when he returned from England. They were equally surprised to see that I ate from banana leaves and did not insist on spoons, knives and forks. I even answered the call of nature as they did; I did not carry a commode round with me, as Gopinath Pandalai, who was the first Travancorean to enter the IMS, had invariably done. Some were pleased to see that I retained my native habits. Others were disappointed; to them an ICS officer in a loin-cloth was an incongruous phenomenon.

From Kottayam I was driven to Trivandrum. There I

had to attend a number of congratulatory meetings, because I was the first Travancorean to have entered that holy of holies, the ICS. One Padmanabha Pillai had passed the examination a decade earlier, but some envious individuals sent a telegram to the Secretary of State stating that he had falsified his age. A Commission, consisting of two judges, was appointed. They found that there was a discrepancy between his age as entered in the school register and when he appeared for the ICS. There was no reason to think that there was any deliberate dishonesty on his part, but the Secretary of State rejected him on the ground that 'an ICS man must be above suspicion'.

The meetings in my honour were bad enough but the dinners were worse. Not all the dinners were given to me with altruistic motives. As a member of the Indian Civil Service I was a most eligible bridegroom; and at those dinners, would-be parents charmed me with the singing of an invisible daughter and sometimes even gave me a glimpse of her. I remember one in particular, tall, slight and graceful, who in her nervousness held on to a pillar as if she had wound herself round it, like a creeper around a mango tree. She did not rouse any special emotion in me. A friend of mine married her. She turned out to be a perfect housewife and a hospitable hostess but developed cancer and died before she was 40.

Somewhat exhausted by the meetings and junketings in Madurai and Trivandrum I was glad to go to Trichinopoly in the first week of January, 1923. Percy Macqueen was my Collector. It used to be said that an ICS man's career was often made or marred by his first Collector. Macqueen neither made nor marred me. He was too much of a gentleman to do so. He was not one of those masterful bureaucrats who were out to mould the young lives entrusted to their care after their own pattern. Macqueen had a healthy doubt whether his own pattern was worth holding up as an example. In fact, he was as nervous of having to train me as I was to be trained by him. Trichinopoly was his first District and I was the first probationer to be put under him. Macqueen was by no means one of the shining lights of the service. As a Sub-Collector in Malabar, he had sown his wild oats amongst

the members of an untouchable but good-looking community in North Malabar. Now he was a respectable, middle-aged individual, married to a tall, gaunt and wholesome Englishwoman, who took care to keep him on the strait and narrow path of marital fidelity. She died a few years later; and after a decent interval, Macqueen took to another strait and narrow path on which, when I heard from him last, he was happily travelling with a child.

The Macqueens put me up with them for the first week or two. In those days, it was unusual for an Indian to be put up by an Englishman, and my prestige must have risen in the eyes of my clerks and chaprasis. On the day after my arrival in Trichinopoly, Macqueen went to the Collector's office on his bicycle and said he would send it back for me. I had never learnt cycling and was too ashamed to admit it. The moment Macqueen left the house, I walked as fast as I could to the office and reached it almost before he sent back the bicycle. 'Oh! you are here already!' said Macqueen. 'Yes,' I replied, 'I thought I had better have a walk.' As long as I was in Trichinopoly, I lived in fear that Macqueen might find out that I did not know how to ride a bicycle.

The reports of my anti-British effusions at Oxford must have reached Macqueen in an exaggerated form. He showed no signs that he had heard about them, except, I suspect, unwittingly on one occasion. I went into his room one afternoon and somehow, for the first two or three minutes, he looked agitated. Something seemed to be worrying him. 'What is that in your hand?' he suddenly asked. 'The keys of the treasury,' I said, for I had been undergoing training in treasury work. 'Oh!' said Macqueen with an involuntary sigh of relief. Those huge keys were in a leather case and looked like a revolver!

Macqueen took little trouble to train me in revenue or judicial work. His main hobby was to translate Malabar folk-songs into English. During his stay in Malabar, he had collected a large number of folk-songs from the lips of milkmaids, grass-cutting women and other rural folk. He showed me those ballads and his translations and asked me what I thought of them. Frankly, he—or, rather, the English

language—was incapable of reproducing the flavour of the originals, but I did not want to damp what seemed to be his one enthusiasm.

No one could have been kinder to me than Macqueen and his wife. Even after I ceased to be their guest, their house was always a home to me, and not a week passed without their asking me for some meal or other. He always took me with him on his tours and insisted on my having at least one of my meals with him every day. I appreciated his kindness, because there was no trace of condescension or patronage about it. I am afraid I cannot say this of the rest of the British community in Trichinopoly. All the important District Officers such as the District Judge and the District Superintendent of Police were British. There was a British regiment in Trichinopoly; moreover, Trichinopoly was the headquarters of the South Indian Railway, of which all the top officers were British. Macqueen advised me to call on them all, and I dutifully did. None of them cared to return my call personally; some sent their cards by post. And during the whole of my year's stay in Trichinopoly, I did not see the inside of an English home, other than that of the ever-hospitable Macqueens.

In Trichinopoly, as elsewhere, there was a clear distinction between English and Indian social life. There was a flourishing club, exclusively English. All Englishmen lived in the cantonment; most Indians in the city. One of the few Indians who lived in the cantonment was Sir T. Desikachari, a local celebrity, who was then a member of a Law Commission. His son, Swami Desikachari, told me that his father was on the point of being appointed a member of the Governor's Executive Council when a younger, more handsome and more resourceful individual, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, attracted Lady Willingdon's attention and was chosen. The Desikacharis were the only Indians who were asked occasionally to a tea or a garden party in the Railway Colony or the Officers' Mess. At one of those parties, Swami Desikachari's wife had a fall while playing badminton and it took some time to hoist her up. I must confess that I enjoyed that sight, for while I felt that I, as a member of the ICS, had no alternative but

to mix with Englishmen, no self-respecting Indian had any business to play up to these condescending sahibs.

At this stage tragedy entered my household. My eldest brother, Sivarama Pillai, suddenly died of pneumonia. What I remember about him most was his great capacity for laughter —or, rather, his incapacity to control it. He had an uncanny sense of the grotesque in life. Whether he was cracking jokes with his friends or talking business with his clients or making love to his wife or playing pranks with his children, he would suddenly burst out into peals of laughter. These peals would succeed one another in an unending chain like spasms of coughing in an asthmatic patient. Or, to change the simile, my brother, at the height of his hysterical laughter would look, and his whole frame would shake, like the conductor of an orchestra playing some mad music. And his laughter would invariably end in a moan which he would self-consciously try to hide with the corners of his loin-cloth. It may be said of him that he laughed away his life, loving his family in his own fashion, but caring little for them and providing nothing for his children, who were also objects of amusement to him. And as soon as he died, Gopi Chettan, with characteristic generosity, took the whole family under his protection.

My sorrow at my brother's death did not last long. It was drowned in a great sea of happiness, which had been lying in wait for me round the corner. I got married.

While at Oxford, I had written a letter to my sister-in-law entrusting her with the task of finding a bride for me. I also wrote a Malayalam poem to her describing the kind of girl I wanted to marry. 'The bee, the lotus, the cloud, the conch-shell, the fish, the deer, the bow, the leaf of the banyan tree, the stem of the plantain tree, the yet unopened flower, silver moonlight and golden goblets—all these must dwell in harmony on my beloved.' My sister-in-law took her duties seriously and gave me an almost clinical analysis of the more eligible girls in Travancore. One, she said, had raven hair; the hair of another was not so thick and glossy, but fell in a shower of graceful curls. One had dark and intelligent eyes; the eyes

of the other were longer and more lustrous, but she was already inclined to dart them a little too much, and that was not a good sign. One had a slightly turned-up nose, which gave her a look of innocence; the other had a more striking nose, which had rather too much character about it. One had breasts like melons; another had breasts like papayas; a third had golden goblets which would satisfy me, but her father had recently been afflicted with leprosy and, though none of the children had it, it might appear in the children's children.

I was not interested in any of these girls. The one in whom I might have been interested was already married. I had never seen her but she was popular among the students and was known as the belle of Travancore. G. P. Sekhar, a connoisseur of beauty, used to describe her charms to me when we were together in the Madras Christian College. I had a twitch of disappointment when I heard at Oxford that she was going to be married to a son of the Maharaja of Cochin. The marriage was a grand affair, but her married life with an inoffensive husband and an imperious mother-in-law was not happy. Within a year or two of her marriage, when she was still in her teens, she was stricken with tuberculosis and died.

The girl whom I eventually married was the one whom I had already mentally rejected. She was the daughter of Sir Sankaran Nair, a member of the Secretary of State's Council. I had never seen her. My brother took it on himself to give his word to Sir Sankaran that I would marry her. One day, towards the end of my stay at Oxford, I received a telegram from my brother, saying, 'Meet Lady Sankaran Nair'. Why Lady Sankaran Nair?, I wondered. Why not Sir Sankaran Nair? I suspected the purport of the telegram and took no notice of it. I was averse to a society marriage—or any marriage at all until I had settled down in life.

When I returned to India from England my brother did not broach the subject to me at all. There were other proposals and he considerately left it to me to choose whomsoever I liked. My sister-in-law seemed pleased that I did not marry Sir Sankaran's daughter. Subconsciously she must have been jealous of any rival to her in my affections; and if I married at all she would have preferred someone of lesser status over

whom she could wield greater influence. However, in Trichinopoly I changed my mind about my brother's proposal. Why I did, I do not know. I suppose my general instinct to follow my brother's desires came into play. Moreover, in Trichinopoly, the evenings were long and the nights lonely, though the days passed quickly enough, because there was much to do and much to learn. In a moment of impulse, I sent a telegram to my brother, agreeing to marry Miss Sankaran Nair.

I knew that custom barred me from making her acquaintance or even meeting her before marriage. All that I asked was that I should be favoured with a photograph. The picture came quickly enough. It was an execrable photograph, taken hurriedly for passport purposes. In any case, her face was not photogenic. But the die was cast.

I met Anujee for the first time at the marriage ceremony. She was a vision of beauty. I was dazed with the sight of so much loveliness. And all that was mine, mine! I could hardly believe it. She seemed to answer perfectly to the description of the juvenile Malayalam poem I had written to my sister-in-law. When I tied the *thali* on her, I touched her accidentally, and this sent an electric thrill through me. I felt that we had lived a hundred, a thousand lives together; and now, those were going to merge into a new life. I felt like the Persian poet who wrote:

> Four eyes met. There were changes in two souls.
> And now I cannot remember whether he is a man
> and I a woman,
> Or he a woman and I a man. All I know is,
> There were two, love came, and there is one.

5

TIRUPPATTUR

A YEAR in Trichinopoly and my probation was over. I was now considered fit to be confirmed in the ICS. I was deemed to have been adequately trained in the Revenue Manual, Survey and Settlement, Treasury and Accounts, the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Evidence Act. How little I knew about all this I alone knew. Anyhow the Government of Madras decided that it was now safe to put me in charge of a sub-division and posted me to Tiruppattur, a pleasant spot on the Bangalore plateau, half-way between Madras and Bangalore.

When I received my orders of transfer, Anujee was in Ottapalam and had just given birth to a child. Soon after our marriage I had suggested to her—and she readily agreed—that we should not have any children for five years. Actually, our eldest child was born exactly 270 days after our marriage. We were married on the 21st of April, 1923; and Ammini was born on the 16th of January, 1924.

It was just as well that Anujee could not accompany me to Tiruppattur. Free from her distracting presence, I gave serious attention to my work. I was at once magistrate and judge. No one took much notice of the demand of the Indian National Congress for the separation of the judiciary and the executive. Gandhiji had raised the standard of non-cooperation, but so far it had had little effect on the villages in my sub-division; and Gandhiji himself had suspended the movement after the gruesome massacre of twenty-two policemen in Chauri Chaura. The Collector of the District of North Arcot, of which Tiruppattur was a part, resided in Vellore and seldom came to my sub-division. For all practical purposes I was *ma-bap*, father and mother of the people of Tiruppattur.

There was plenty of variety about my work. The day began at 6. After *chota hazri* I would go out, walking, riding

or driving a car, for the purpose of inspecting some site or other—maybe a public road on which a private landowner had encroached, or an irrigation channel which had been blocked by a farmer to the detriment of his neighbour, or a piece of land which had to be acquired for a public purpose, or a field of corn, where the grain had perished and there was a request for the remission of land revenue. By 9 or 10 o'clock I would return home, have breakfast and attend to some office work. From noon till 5 or 6, with an hour's break for lunch, I would be in court, trying cases, recording the statements of witnesses and thus ruining my handwriting, and pronouncing judgments. Then there would be tennis, beer and bridge, and after a quiet dinner, I would retire early to bed, healthy, wealthy and wise.

At Tiruppattur I began to take a greater interest in judicial work than I had done in Trichinopoly. In Trichinopoly I had acquired a reputation as an acquitting magistrate. In the first case which I tried there, a well-dressed person was charged with having stolen a bicycle. A number of witnesses deposed against him, but somehow he struck me as a gentleman, and F. G. Natesa Iyer, the Chairman of the Municipality, gave evidence that the accused bore a fine character. Natesa Iyer had a history behind him; he had been a Brahmin, but became a convert to Christianity, which helped him in his official career, and on his retirement he again became a devout Brahmin. Relying on Natesa Iyer's evidence and my own instinct, I acquitted the accused. The District Superintendent of Police complained to the Collector that the man was wrongly acquitted; I seemed, he said, to qualify for membership of a famous London Club, where there was said to be a notice: 'Bishops may not steal umbrellas because of their holiness!'

In Tiruppattur, where I was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, I became more strict as a magistrate and less disposed to give the benefit of the doubt to the accused. It is all right for an abstract jurist to say that it is better that a hundred guilty men should escape punishment than that one innocent man should suffer, but for the administrator this proposition is decidedly inconvenient.

The most anxious time for a District Officer in Tiruppattur

used to be at the Muslim festival, Moharram. There were a few thousand Muslims in Tiruppattur who seemed harmless enough. The police, however, told me that they were highly inflammable. Some twenty years previously they had run amuck and chased the Sub-Collector, J. F. Hall, through the streets of Tiruppattur. (In the subsequent Honours List, Hall was awarded an OBE and Salar Khan, who hid him in his house and protected him from his assailants, was made a Khan Bahadur.) Memories of this incident still lingered; and the police rounded up hundreds of persons suspected of being bad characters under that very convenient section, 144, of the Criminal Procedure Code. I was too young and immature to control the zeal of the police and was rightly ticked off by the Collector for having permitted the indiscriminate use of Section 144.

My predecessor at Tiruppattur was an Englishman, Byers. He had a reputation as a hot-tempered man, and there were many stories about him. Once, annoyed by the prevarications of a witness in court, he threw an ink-pot at him, and the witness retaliated by throwing his slippers at Byers. Thereafter, Byers used to ask his stenographer to keep the ink-pot at a safe distance, lest he should be tempted to use it again. He had a dog which disappeared, and he set the entire police force of the sub-division to bring it back, alive or dead. After many days' search, the police produced a canine carcase which was ceremoniously buried in the garden of the Sub-Collector's bungalow.

This bungalow was situated just above the railway station; and four trains, the Up and Down Mangalore and Mettupalayam trains, used to pass through Tiruppattur between 1 and 2 a.m. Byers and his wife, who was equally irritable, could never get used to the hooting of these trains. We were told that once she went down in her dressing-gown to the platform with a handful of stones and pelted the driver. For the first week or two these midnight trains used to keep us awake too. Thereafter, they never disturbed us and their hooting mixed freely with our dreams.

Despite his idiosyncrasies, Byers rose to be a Judge of the High Court of Madras, but he carried his hot temper with him

and this brought his career to an unseemly end. Towards the end of British rule in India, when Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India movement was at its height, a crowd of youngsters, mostly students, surrounded the car in which Byers was emerging from the High Court and started shouting slogans. Byers took out his revolver and fired a shot, and a boy fell down dead. He was tried for murder but acquitted; the Chief Presidency Magistrate accepted his plea that he had fired the revolver on to the ground simply to frighten the crowd, which seemed very ill-disposed towards him, and that the bullet ricochetted unexpectedly and hit the boy. Public opinion was greatly incensed at the conduct of Byers and the judgment in this case; and Rajaji, the shrewd Chief Minister of Madras, at once upheld the sanctity of the law and appeased public opinion by persuading Byers to take the leave due to him and retire.

In Tirupattur our only friends were Sathe, the District Forest Officer, and his charming wife. There were a few lawyers and non-gazetted officials, but I was not expected to mix with them. The ICS Manual gave meticulous instructions regarding the treatment to be accorded to people of different grades. With a Deputy Collector or Deputy Superintendent of Police you may shake hands, even though he belonged to the Provincial Service; you may offer him a seat; you may even call him by his name without prefixing Mister or Rao Sahib or Khan Sahib. But to a Tahsildar or Inspector of Police you may not extend these courtesies except on your first arrival in, and departure from, your station. It is by such taboos that the British Officer maintained his prestige in India; and I too, belonging to a predominantly British service, conformed to the prescribed etiquette.

Tiruppattur was one of the four sub-divisions of North Arcot. J. C. Molony was the District Collector. He was a great big Irishman who loved his pipe and his dog, Deacon Ebenezer Thompson. He was known for his feats of physical prowess. There was not a hill in the district which he would not climb. He always preferred his bicycle or his feet to his car. Often he would leave his camp and go off to some spot, 50 miles away, on his bicycle, leaving word to his chauffeur to start a few hours

later and pick him up if he was found dead on the roadside; and once he was picked up very near to this state when he had had a sunstroke. Molony made a name for himself as Commissioner of the Corporation of Madras. He was the first to supply chlorinated water to the city and for a long time it was known as 'Molony's mixture'.

Molony was an able officer who combined ability with a rare sense of detachment. 'Am I', he wrote in his little-known, but delightful, *Book of South India*, 'really doing anything among or for these people, or am I but an absurdly self-conscious straw, floating over a great, deep, slow-moving tide?' He looked askance at the antics of a brother-officer like Vernon who surrounded a village in Guntur which, in response to Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign, had refused to pay land revenue, and forced them to pay it at the point of the bayonet. Molony knew the limitations of bureaucratic rule; he defined a Collector's office as 'a multiplicity of tails which sometimes singly and sometimes collectively wags a feebly resisting head'. He also had a literary talent which expressed itself even in such documents as his Census Report of the Madras Presidency.

In ordinary official correspondence, too, there was a certain individuality about Molony's style. Once I extended my casual leave by a day and asked him how the extra day was to be treated. 'Treat it in any way you like,' came the reply, 'provided you do not rouse the demented ingenuity of the Accountant General.' In those days, an ICS officer in Madras was required to be proficient in two South Indian languages before he could be confirmed. I took the examination in Tamil and passed; and Malayalam was my mother-tongue. I therefore considered myself proficient in two South Indian languages. But the Accountant General insisted that I should take the examination in Malayalam too. I pointed out that I knew more Malayalam than my examiner was ever likely to know, but this did not satisfy the Accountant General. I therefore brought this matter to the notice of Molony. 'The Accountant General', he replied, 'is debarred by virtue of his office from exercising his commonsense'—a dictum which I had occasion to remember again and again in my service.

Molony had a sense of humour. Once he received a telegram from a zamindar, MY CROPS ALL DROWNED WIRE WHAT TO DO. Promptly he replied, TRY ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION.

I often called on Molony in Vellore, the district headquarters, some 60 miles from Tiruppattur. With me he would discuss all things in heaven and earth, except the affairs of my subdivision which he expected me to run exactly as I chose.

Anujee joined me in Tiruppattur in the middle of 1924. As a young mother she looked even more beautiful than as a bride, and we promptly resumed a life which, to us, was still honeymoon. We were both fond of camping. In Trichinopoly our favourite camping places were by the river Kavery, sacred to millions of Hindus who washed away their sins in its waters on full-moon and other holy days. The Kavery was sacred to us, two young innocents in a different sense. With not a care in the world, we would lie on its silky sand and talk and talk or just look into each other's eyes, until the stars came out and were reflected in the river and darkness came and wrapped us up, and the unwanted chaprasi quietly withdrew, to come back an hour later with a kerosene oil lantern in his hands to lead us to our tent. In Tiruppattur we missed the Kavery. But there were hills, the Elagiris and the Javadis. It was in the Elagiris that our second daughter was conceived; we called her Parvathy, 'daughter of the hills'.

We had hardly been in Tiruppattur for a year when I received a telegram from the Government of India, informing me that they had decided to take me into the Foreign and Political Department and to post me to Hyderabad as Under-Secretary to the Resident. I was directed to proceed to Hyderabad expeditiously, as my predecessor, Col. Severn Williams, was urgently required for an assignment in Baluchistan. Molony, however, would not let me go until I was relieved by my successor, Barter. 'I hope,' said Molony, 'Baluchistan will remain where it is even if Severn Williams does not get there in time.' I mentioned this remark tactlessly to Williams and he exclaimed, 'I suppose Molony is one of those dirty Irishmen in the ICS.' 'No,' I said emphatically, 'he is one of the finest men I have come across.'

6

HYDERABAD

IN THE first part of this century, the ICS was predominantly manned by Englishmen, and the Foreign and Political Department, which dealt with the Frontier and the Princely States, was practically reserved for them. The reason for the exclusion of Indians was that the Princes would not like their own countrymen to be Residents or representatives of the Paramount Power, and that an Indian, and especially a Hindu, would not be able to command the respect and obedience of the unruly Muslim tribes on the Frontier. It was my privilege, as the first Indian to have been admitted to the Foreign and Political Department, to dispel both these myths. In this I had the encouragement and assistance of a number of British colleagues, such as Arthur Parsons, Agent to the Governor-General and Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan; Aubrey Metcalfe, Foreign Secretary, and his successor, Olaf Caroe, who stimulated my *Wanderlust* and encouraged me to undertake an overland journey from India to China; Herbert Thompson, whose service and mine had much in common—Peshawar, Hyderabad, Bharatpur and New Delhi—and with whom I have kept up a pleasant correspondence even after retirement; Leslie Chauncy, my Assistant Political Agent in Fort Sandeman, than whom none could have been more loyal or cooperative; Hugh Richardson, who was in love with Tibet in the Charles Bell tradition and had a corresponding suspicion of the Chinese, and yet put me in the way of things in Chungking before returning to his beloved Tibet; and Charles Fry, with whom I worked in the early, exciting days of post-independence India and, ten years later, in the even more exciting days of the Hungarian Revolution, when he was the British Ambassador in Budapest and I the Indian Ambassador.

The Foreign and Political Department was constituted partly from the ICS and partly from the Army. Marriage was

normally a disqualification for admission, as there were a number of non-family stations on the Frontier, but in my own case, this disability, aggravated by the existence of two children, was overlooked. Some members of the Department preferred to serve on the Frontier; others, in the red-carpeted Indian States. But one was liable to be transferred from the Frontier to the States and vice versa. A man who had spent many years on the Frontier usually bore the stamp of that virile region; he was generally tougher and had greater powers of rapid decision, whereas a man who had spent all his service in the States was inclined to be smooth, polished and sometimes pompous. This was true of the two Residents under whom I served in Hyderabad, Sir Lennox Russell and Sir William Barton. The former was a product of the States; the latter, of the Frontier.

When I was posted to Hyderabad as Under-Secretary, Sir Lennox Russell was on the verge of retirement. Lothian, the Secretary to the Resident, and the other members of his staff were in despair; they simply could not get a decision out of him. Any case which was put up to him, if it was at all complicated, came back with the order: 'Please speak.' We would speak, and the file would still lie on the Resident's table until the question solved itself by sheer lapse of time or got beyond solution. We always used to wonder why Sir Lennox was posted to the premier Residency in the gift of the Foreign and Political Department. The only explanation we could think of was that his grandfather used to be the Resident at Hyderabad many years ago and had given his name to a corner of the Residency Bazaar, Russellgunj. Sir Lennox had a hand in compiling a Manual of Instructions for the Officers of the Political Department. It contained the sage statement that the best work which a Political Officer often did was what he left undone. Sir Lennox was true to this motto.

Sir Lennox Russell was always greatly concerned about his health. He hardly ever stayed in the historic and beautiful Residency in Hyderabad, as it was surrounded by an insanitary bazaar; he preferred to live in the Bolarum Residency some 18 miles away. Even there he was afraid of mosquitoes and had some noble old trees cut down. Lady Russell made a perfect partner for him, sharing his ponderous dignity.

During Sir Lennox Russell's time, the administration of Hyderabad went from bad to worse. It is true that in theory the internal affairs of the State were beyond the Resident's purview. The Resident was the representative of the British Government, and the relations between the Government and the Princes were regulated by treaties, which had been signed between their ancestors and the East India Company. These treaties expressly prohibited the British Government from interfering in the internal affairs of the States. At the same time, the British had an obligation to protect the Princes against external invasion or internal subversion. As a corollary it was the duty of the Government to ensure that a certain minimum standard of administration was maintained in the States. What that standard should be was not easy to define; whatever it was, the administration in Hyderabad had fallen below it, and Sir Lennox Russell looked on with philosophic unconcern.

The less effective the Resident was, the more assertive became the Nizam. His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad had many virtues. He was not one of those royal voluptuaries who went from one continental capital to another, sampling beauty and wasting money. In fact, he got rid of most of the 300 women of his father's harem and kept a modest 30 for himself. The Nizam had a high sense of duty and great capacity for work. All the threads of the administration were in his hands. He had an acute sense of the value of money. One of the richest men in the world, he wanted to be richer still. He held Durbars frequently, at which it was the custom for him to receive presents, called *nazar*, from his subjects. There were complaints that this time-honoured system was being abused and that the appointment and promotion of officials often depended on the amount offered as *nazar*. The Nizam loved money for its own sake; he did not spend it on his family or even on himself; on the contrary, his way of living was frugal and almost austere. On one occasion, I myself noticed how economical he was. A tennis match was in progress under the patronage of the Nizam. Seeing Anujee among the spectators, the Nizam graciously asked her to sit by his side and ordered an ice-cream for her.

Viccaji, the principal caterer in Hyderabad, brought an ice-cream. 'Take it away!', shouted the Nizam, 'such a huge portion! Mrs Menon won't be able to eat it.' Viccaji took it back and brought half the quantity. 'You fool!', shouted the Nizam, 'this is still too much. How can anyone eat so much ice-cream?' Viccaji took it away again and brought back just enough for two or three mouthfuls.

The Nizam's great ambition was to get back Berar. Berar had been the richest portion of Hyderabad in the nineteenth century. It was incorporated in British India by Lord Curzon, as compensation for the persistent failure of the Hyderabad Government to meet the expenditure incurred by the British Government on the British Forces which used to be stationed in Hyderabad. The Nizam contended that the whole transaction was unfair and that his weak father had been overawed by the imperious Viceroy into giving his agreement to the transfer of Berar. When the British Government refused to restore Berar to the Nizam, he threatened to appeal to the League of Nations. This was carrying things too far; for the Nizam to put himself on a footing of equality with the King-Emperor was intolerable. Then Lord Reading, the Viceroy, wrote a letter to the Nizam, pointing out that the circumstances under which the original treaties between the British Government and the Princes were signed had changed, that the British Government had now become the Paramount Power in India and that no Prince had the right to challenge its paramountcy. The Viceroy even observed that the fact that the Nizam enjoyed the title of 'Faithful Ally of the British Crown' did not put him in a category separate from other Indian Princes. Such plain speaking had never before been heard by the Nizam or any other Prince in India.

It was at this juncture that I was posted to Hyderabad. Within a few months of my arrival, Sir Lennox Russell was succeeded by Sir William Barton. Sir William had spent most of his service on the North-West Frontier and looked every inch a Frontier Officer. A compact, well-knit man, he was hard as nails, and every gesture of his breathed energy and decision. He lost no time in exposing the misdeeds of the

Nizam's Government to the Government of India; and there were rumours that the Nizam might be deposed. The Nizam saved himself by accepting the demands for various reforms in the administration, and these reforms were to be carried out by the Government of India's own nominees. The Berar, however, was irretrievably lost to Hyderabad. Little did the Nizam dream in 1925 that, in another quarter of a century, Hyderabad itself would cease to exist as a separate state.

For me Hyderabad was a new world. I had never seen anything like it. All the forces of a waning Empire were there—autocracy, feudalism and paramountcy—and, through them all, was breaking in a new, faint voice, the voice of the people. Eventually, this voice would prevail, and by the middle of the century nothing would be left of the autocracy of the Nizam, the plutocracy of the nobles and the paramountcy of the British Crown.

In 1925, however, all these were living forces. The Nizam was the most powerful potentate in India. He was the head of the largest and most populous Indian State. He enjoyed the highest number of salutes.

He also had a title, which no other Prince had, namely, His Exalted Highness, which gave rise to the vulgar joke, His Exhausted Highness. But the Nizam was not content with his large dominion; he had expansionist tendencies. He demanded an outlet to the sea and coveted the port of Masulipatam, to which he had a vague historical claim. If Britain left India, even Bombay might be a tempting target. 'If the British were to withdraw from India today,' said Sir Ali Imam, a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, 'the Nizam would fly his flag in Bombay tomorrow.' 'But you forget that Poona is on the way,' retorted Sir Sankaran Nair, who was to be his successor in the Viceroy's Council.

Over the Berar question, however, the ambition of the Nizam came into conflict with the paramountcy of Great Britain. How British paramountcy could be reconciled with the sanctity of treaties between the Princes and the East India Company, which had been signed as between equals, was a thorny constitutional point. Many attempts had been made to define

paramountcy. A Royal Commission, which was appointed to go into this question, clinched the argument by asserting that 'paramountcy is paramount'. It certainly was so in the case of Berar.

Between autocracy and paramountcy, between the Nizam and the Resident, now siding with one and now with the other, and carrying tales to both, stood the nobles of Hyderabad. They were men of enormous wealth and lived at the height of luxury. The most cultivated among them was Maharaja Sir Kishen Prasad, who was a scholar of Persian as well as Sanskrit, as proficient in the Koran as in the Gita and, with delightful impartiality, married to four women, two Hindu and two Muslim. There were other personalities, too, each notable in his own way. Among them were Sir Afsar-ul-Mulk, the Commander-in-Chief of the Nizam's Army, whose martial traditions were continued by his son, Osman; Sir Wali-ud-Daula, who would not go anywhere without a host of liveried servants, some looking after his hookah and others after his *pandan*; Sir Fazl-ul-Mulk, who was famous for the magnificent pulao and kurma dinners he gave; Sir Amin Jung, who had one of the best private libraries in India; Sir Imad-ul-Mulk and his son, to whom must go the credit for reverently preserving the precious sculptures and paintings in the cave temples at Ellora and Ajanta; Sir Nizamat Jung, scholar, poet and politician, who built a house on the bank of Hussain Sagar on the model of his old college at Cambridge; Sir Farid-ul-Mulk, a Parsee, playing bridge all day long with someone holding the cards for him because he was too frail; and Sir Salar Jung, a great collector, whose house was full of cupboards packed with rare china, Satsuma bronzes and Sevres porcelain, old Persian carpets and pictures, marble statuettes and chandeliers from all parts of the world, and such historical relics as a Dresden dressing-table belonging to Marie Antoinette, a Sevres porcelain piece presented by Louis XVI to Tippu Sultan in 1788, a dagger, studded with emeralds and rubies, belonging to Nur Jehan, and a Holy Koran, autographed by the Emperors Jehangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb. There was no other city in India which could boast of such a galaxy of cultured, idle and versatile men.

Recalling my days there, I feel inclined to shed a tear over the disappearance of Hyderabad from the map of India. Hyderabad used to have a character of its own. It was the last repository of the Mogul tradition. Indeed a favourite adjective which was on everyone's lips was Moghlai. The hospitality which the Nawabs and nobles dispensed was truly Moghlai; so was the standard of their personal living. Moghlai, too, was the friendship between Hindus and Mussalmans in the city of Hyderabad; there was no religious or communal trouble. Sometimes the term Moghlai was used in a less complimentary sense; if you arrived late at a function, you would laugh it off by saying that it was just an example of Moghlai punctuality. Yet this State, where the Upper Tenth lived so elegantly and luxuriously and in complete forgetfulness of the hardships of 90 per cent of the population, could not possibly survive in an independent India; and if I were to shed a tear over its eclipse, it would be a very idle tear indeed.

As Under-Secretary to the Resident, my duties were manifold, but modest. In addition to my work in the Resident's Secretariat, I was also the District Magistrate for Secunderabad and the Administered Areas, the Magistrate for the Nizam's Railway, the Superintendent of the Residency Bazaars, the Manager of the Residency Gardens and the Registrar of Births and Deaths. Sometimes, I would write a letter from myself as Superintendent of the Residency Bazaars to myself as District Magistrate, complaining of the inadequate sentences imposed by myself in my magisterial capacity for the municipal offences committed in my jurisdiction. Or I would write a letter from myself as Under-Secretary to the Resident to myself as Superintendent of the Residency Bazaar, complaining of the perpetual noise in the bazaar which disturbed the Resident's sleep.

On one or two occasions, my duties brought me into contact—or conflict—with the Nizam. An old childless widow died in the Hyderabad State, leaving Rs. 15 lakhs to her nephew, one Ghulam Mohiuddin. Under the law, the money left by anyone who died intestate would pass to the Nizam.

Fearing that the Nizam might try to seize the amount, Ghulam Mohiuddin fled to the Residency area and was given special police protection. The Nizam protested that the will by which the money was left by the widow to Ghulam Mohiuddin was a fraudulent document and that he was the rightful heir; and the Government of India entrusted me with the inquiry into this case.

On the eve of the inquiry, a curious incident occurred. I was invited to tea by Maharaja Sir Kishen Prasad. When I was about to leave my house, Dewan Bahadur Aravamuda Ayyangar, who had the knack of being in the good graces of the Nizam as well as of the Resident even when they were in conflict, came panting up to me and implored me not to go. He said that the Nawab of Tarbund, a well-known satellite of the Nizam, had been instructed to drop in casually at the tea party and to give me a warning thus: 'The Nizam is the richest man in the world and the future of a man who wins his favour is assured for ever. His Exalted Highness is also the most powerful ruler in India and a man who incurs his displeasure is finished.' Despite Ayyangar's advice, I went to Maharaja Sir Kishen Prasad's house with a certain amount of excitement. When we were having ice-cream, the Nawab of Tarbund turned up and talked of the weather and other harmless subjects. He did not convey to me the message which he was supposed to give.

The inquiry into the case of Ghulam Mohiuddin caused a sensation in Hyderabad. Eminent counsel, including the late Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, appeared for the Nizam. I found that the will, by which Rs. 15 lakhs had been left to Ghulam Mohiuddin, was perfectly genuine and that he was entitled to receive the amount. I was told that when the Nizam heard of this decision he flew into a towering rage.

A few months later, the Nizam's brother-in-law, one Basheer Beg, was charged by British Indian police for rash and negligent driving in Secunderabad, a British Administered Area, and causing the death of an old woman. This case, too, was tried by me. After hearing the preliminary evidence, I framed charges against Basheer Beg as I thought that a prima facie case had been made, but in the end I gave him the benefit of the

doubt and acquitted him. The Nizam was pleased with this verdict. 'Menon is a just man,' he said. And with this princely bouquet in my official buttonhole, I left Hyderabad for the North-West Frontier where I was to spend the next three years.

7

THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

I REACHED Peshawar on a crisp April day. Spring was at its height, and Peshawar was one large bed of roses. Summer, however, was not far off, and preparations had already begun for the migration of the Government to the hills. Nathiagali, nearly 8,000 feet high, was the summer capital of the North-West Frontier. There we stayed from the beginning of May to the beginning of October. These hill stations must be reckoned among the more enduring achievements of British rule in India. The British had taken care to carve out the Provinces of India in such a way as to provide a capital for each Provincial Government in the hills as well as in the plains. Nathiagali was situated in the Hazara district. This area had more in common with the Punjab than with the NWFP: it lay on the Indian side of the Indus; and it was the only district in the North-West Frontier with a non-Pathan population. But it was incorporated into the North-West Frontier in order that the Governor of the Frontier might have a good summer resort.

As Under-Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, I had a quaint little house, overlooking a deep, romantic chasm, across which on a clear day we could spot the glittering peak of Nanga Parbat, the ninth highest mountain in the world. The Chief Commissioner, the Secretariat officials and the heads of certain Departments lived in Nathiagali for six months; and District Officers, working in the plains, came up on recess for three or four weeks. The chief social centre was the Nathiagali Club. The Under-Secretary had a prescriptive right to be elected Secretary of the Club, and I, though the only Indian member, was elected Secretary. When we went down to Peshawar, however, I found that, as an Indian, I could not become a full member of the Peshawar Club. Indians belonging to the Imperial Services could become honorary members, paying a subscription but not having the right to take

part in elections. I declined to be a member of the Club on those terms. Some years later, when an Indianized Cavalry regiment was posted to Peshawar, they resented this invidious position and refused to let their horses take part in the great annual event, the races. Then the bar on the admission of Indians was removed.

Our stay in Nathiagali, however, was thoroughly enjoyable. Everyone tried to make us feel at home. There was a good deal of entertainment among the officers and we saw the same faces over and over again. How much more graceful was the entertainment in those days than now! That horror of horrors, the cocktail party, had not yet made its appearance, nor had that other horror, the stand-up dinner-party. Small dinner parties for 8, 10 or 12, elegantly arranged and followed by music or a game of bridge or monopoly, were the rule. At these parties politics was seldom discussed and no one laid down the law. Intellectually the conversation was never allowed to rise above a certain modest, decorous level. Mrs Darling, however, the wife of a distinguished Punjab civilian, always soared above this level, loved to discuss art and literature and even organized Shakespeare readings. She was therefore dubbed a blue-stocking. Personally, we liked her and admired her, but we took care to conceal our admiration for her, lest we too should be relegated into the same category as herself. Tea and tennis parties were common, but they were apt to be interrupted by an evening shower. Above all, we enjoyed long walks by the mountain-side, watching during the monsoon the most weird cloud-effects, and after the monsoon some lovely sunsets.

There was a holiday atmosphere about Nathiagali. This gave me a chance of getting used gradually to the Frontier, instead of being overwhelmed by routine work. In Nathiagali, I found plenty of time to read the literature on the Frontier. I also found time to learn Pushtu and acquired sufficient proficiency in it to carry on a conversation with a Mahsud, a Wazir, a Mohmand, and an Afridi, for they spoke different dialects. I even found time for match-making.

Apart from me there was only one Keralite on the Frontier, K. R. K. Menon of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department, who subsequently became Finance Secretary to the Government

of India. The moment I met him I spotted him as a possible bridegroom for my favourite niece, Sarasu; and though his father had vaguely intended that he should marry another attractive girl, the daughter of a famous poet in Kerala, K.R.K. succumbed to my recital of my niece's charms, including her proficiency in music. This was good practice for me, because in another 20 or 25 years, we would have to find not only bridegrooms for my daughters, but brides for my sons. I must admit that, except in Ammini's case, we had to apply a little gentle parental pressure before they agreed to take the plunge. Sometimes, Anujee and I wondered whether it was wise on our part to have exercised even so much pressure on them in a matter which so vitally affected their future, but seeing the results of the marriages, which have all been ideally happy, we have no regrets. In India love need not necessarily begin at first sight in order to be durable.

In October we descended from Nathiagali into the plains. In Peshawar I enjoyed what I had lacked and missed till then, the company of other Indians. Anujee and I formed a number of lasting friendships among the Pathans, whose hospitality to us was often overwhelming. Indeed, hospitality is the first article in the Pathan code of honour, and in volume and quality it cannot be excelled. Chief among our friends was Dr Khan Sahib, still seemingly uninterested in the politics of his brother, 'the Frontier Gandhi', but biding his time to plunge into the fray. We knew Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum, who was as resourceful as any political officer ever was and became the first Chief Minister of the NWFP in the early thirties. Others with whom I liked to talk were Khan Bahadur Kuli Khan and K.B. Moghul Baz Khan: they would describe vividly how, a few months previously, they went in search of Miss Ellis, who had been kidnapped into tribal territory from the heart of the Kohat cantonment, after her mother, the wife of Col. Ellis, had been brutally murdered, and how they brought her safely back. The Hindus of the Frontier, too, emulated the Pathans in their hospitality. When we had no house of our own we stayed with Mehr Chand Khanna, who seemed to own half of Peshawar, but lost all his property during the partition and felt

all the better for it. Among other friends were Rai Bahadur Dinanath, Garrison Engineer, who lived in English style and had an English accent; and Dalaya, the greatly respected professor of Edwardes College.

Sir Norman Bolton was the Chief Commissioner of the NWFP. He was enjoying a second term as Chief Commissioner but, as will be seen presently, he was not destined to enjoy it long. Aubrey Metcalfe was the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner. He and his wife were very friendly to us. One evening at a ball in Government House, Metcalfe asked Anujee if she would dance with him in the fifth item of the programme. 'I am sorry, I do not dance,' she said. 'Then you will sit out with me,' said Metcalfe. 'All right,' she mumbled. She did not know what sitting out meant, and what its implications were. She came and asked me for my advice. I told her that it seemed something harmless; it merely meant that she and Metcalfe would sit in some quiet corner and have a talk, while the others were dancing. Nevertheless, when the fifth dance came, Anujee's courage failed and she made herself invisible. When Metcalfe saw her some minutes later he merely said, 'Oh, I was looking for you.' That was the last time that Anujee was asked to dance or to sit out. However, this did not affect the esteem of my brother-officers for her; in fact, it only enhanced it, because she always had the courage to be herself.

The Under-Secretaryship in Peshawar was the lightest job I held in my service. Metcalfe set the tone: he was not one of the world's workers, but a gentleman. The winter in Peshawar was the finest in the world. We worked only in the morning, except on Mondays and Thursdays when even the morning started late, because the officers went hunting with the Peshawar Hounds. The afternoons were too glorious to be spent indoors, and Peshawar had a splendid golf-course. The fact is that the administration on the frontier was run, not from the Secretariat, but on the principle of trusting the man on the spot. And the men on the spot, the Deputy Commissioners and Political Agents, were men of experience and initiative who loved the Frontier and disliked nothing more than to be pestered with directions from headquarters.

Not all officers in the Secretariat, however, followed a policy of *laissez-faire*. When Metcalfe was succeeded by Caroe things began to hum. His advent synchronized with an unprecedented awakening on the Frontier, which had hitherto remained immune from the political winds which blew in the rest of India. For Caroe as a district officer a sixteen-hour day was nothing unusual, and he brought this habit of hard, unremitting work into the Secretariat. He was a man with a mission; he would not let sleeping dogs lie. Indeed, he thought that the dogs on the North-West Frontier never slept; they only pretended to sleep; and if the rulers were easy-going or lethargic, the dogs would pounce on them. Eternal vigilance was Caroe's watchword. He was devoted to the Frontier and sedulously prepared himself for the highest post in the Province. But by the time he attained his ambition, it was already too late; India was on the verge of independence and in the throes of partition, and a plebiscite was to be held in the NWFP in order to decide whether the people would prefer to belong to India or to Pakistan. Khan Sahib, the Chief Minister, preferred to have as Governor someone less closely involved in current politics than Caroe and therefore got Sir George Cunningham, who had already been Governor of the Province, to come back as the first Governor of the NWFP under Pakistan. In retirement, however, Caroe continued his interest in the Frontier and wrote an admirable book, called *The Pathans*.

One of my joys in Peshawar was to go up and down the Khyber Pass. The Khyber Railway, a masterpiece of engineering, had just been completed. But we generally went up by road. Crossing and re-crossing the valley winds the primitive caravan route, along which, as in bygone centuries, could be seen, on Fridays, a hundred camels, tied nose to tail, tail to nose, carrying the merchandise of Afghanistan, Bokhara and Samarkand into the teeming centres of North Indian trade. Soon after leaving the barbed wire entanglement around the cantonment of Peshawar we see in the distance the Pass creeping up like a serpent. At the entrance to the Pass, ten miles from Peshawar, stands the Fort of Jamrud. To the right is the white tomb of Hari Singh, the Sikh General who, with his entire

army, was destroyed on this spot by a band of 40,000 Afridis. The Sikhs had ruled the Frontier with an iron hand, and Hari Singh instilled such terror into the hearts of the tribesmen that even now Pathan mothers say, '*Hari Singh razi!*', 'Hari Singh is coming!', to frighten naughty children. Another ruthless officer employed by the Sikhs was an Italian, General Avitabile, who as Governor of Peshawar used to lease out lands to the Maliks on condition that they produced 100 Afridi heads every year. One of the Maliks showed me the original lease when I visited his village for hawk-hunting.

With such turbulent memories we leave Jamrud and enter Afridi territory. There we see a notification, saying that on no account should we step off the road. This means that we are no longer in the administered area but in tribal, or independent, territory. There are no laws and codes here; no courts and colleges; no magistrates and policemen. There is only the old, old law, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Around dangerous corners and hairpin bends, the Khyber road climbs to the Fort of Shagai, recently completed. Here, on the heights of Shagai, the invaders from Central Asia must have paused and raised the cry of '*Allah ho Akbar!*'; from here, after months of dreary marching through inhospitable regions, where not a blade of grass grows, they must have suddenly seen, stretched out and prostrate at their feet, the rich, fertile and beautiful valley of Peshawar, leading to the still richer, more fertile and more beautiful plains of Hindustan. From the Fort of Shagai the road descends sharply into the narrowest part of the Pass, the Ali Masjid Gorge. Then it rises steadily to Landi Kotal and again drops steeply into Landi Khana, the last cantonment, where we see an Indian sentry on one side and an Afghan sentry on the other. Here and there we see Afridi houses, each house a fort, with a central tower in which a man may have to hide for days in fear of some hereditary enemy, the avenger of some family feud, the personification of tribal justice. We also see certain outposts, located on hill-tops, whence a raiding party could be easily discerned. These outposts are manned by Khassadars, a kind of irregular tribal police, formed for the purpose of enforcing the security of the road. From the contemplation of

these modern institutions, the mind is suddenly switched back 2,000 years by the appearance of a Buddhist stupa on a mound near Landi Kotal. The Khyber Pass is indeed a microcosm of Indian history.

In former years the Frontier was a region where a select band of adventurous and intrepid men could carry out their experiments in administration without fear of public criticism. On the Frontier itself there was no public opinion worth talking about; and in India the public had not begun to evince much interest in the frontier problem. But now this attitude of indifference had begun to change. In the newspapers and in the legislature, the Government of India's frontier policy became a target of criticism. In the eyes of some critics the Government could do nothing right, and its policy on the Frontier was criticized for its waste, its extravagance and its inhumanity. The practice of imposing collective punishment on villages and, in extreme cases, of bombing them from the air, was condemned. Indian public opinion took note of the fact that at the International Disarmament Conference it was Britain and France who opposed the abolition of air bombing, on the ground that they had far-flung imperial responsibilities and that, in some outlying areas of the Empire, bombing was the most humane method of inflicting punishment. What, asked Indians, could these outlying areas be but the North-West Frontier? Some Indians even suggested that the unadministered areas on the Frontier were being left in that nebulous condition in order to provide British troops with target practice.

The spokesmen of the Government of India rebutted such accusations with vigour. The Government invited a representative delegation from the Indian Legislature to visit the Frontier and see things with their own eyes. Such a delegation visited Peshawar when I was there. I can now remember only two of the members, two who would have stood out in any group of men in any part of the world, Motilal Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Motilal Nehru was one of the most gracious men I have ever set eyes on. In his looks and bearing, in his gait and speech, in every gesture of his, he showed that

he was the product of a thousand years of Hindu civilization, impregnated, for a few hundred years, with Muslim influences. The United Provinces was the last refuge of this composite culture and Motilal Nehru was its finest flower.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan was of a different type. Over six feet tall, he literally stood head and shoulders above his colleagues. If Motilal Nehru was a product of Indian culture at its best, Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a true son of the virile frontier. Yet this rugged individual had come under the humane influence of Mahatma Gandhi, so much so that he came to be known as the Frontier Gandhi. He formed a society of *Khudai Khidmatgars*, Servants of God, popularly called 'Red Shirts', with the avowed intention of tackling the social and political problems of the Frontier in the light of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings.

In 1929, the Red Shirts launched a boycott of the Simon Commission. This Royal Commission, consisting of seven Englishmen, with Sir John Simon as Chairman, had been appointed to recommend what further steps should be taken for the advance of India towards self-government. The appointment of this all-white commission to sit in judgement over India's ability to rule herself was bitterly resented by the Congress and other political organizations. Then the Government of India tried to appease public opinion by appointing, side by side with the Commission, an Indian Central Committee of seven members, charged with the same responsibilities as the Commission. Always ready to defy public opinion as well as the Government, Sir Sankaran Nair agreed to be its Chairman. On his arrival in Peshawar, he expressed a desire to pay a private visit to Afghanistan, and the Chief Commissioner made the necessary arrangements. Anujee and I were to have accompanied him. Our passports and visas were ready, and we were to have set off one morning. The previous evening came a telegram from Sir Francis Humphrys, British Minister in Kabul, saying that some tribes had been giving trouble and suggesting that the trip might be postponed. That was the beginning of a revolt which swept King Amanulla off the throne of Afghanistan.

Amanulla was not a favourite with the officers in the North-

West Frontier. It was he who had defied Great Britain and wrested independence for his country in 1919. Since then he had been following a policy which would probably be called today 'positive neutrality'. Accompanied by Queen Suraiya, the King undertook a tour of European capitals, during which he was received and feted with as much honour in Moscow as in London. He returned to Afghanistan a keen reformer, full of ideas for modernizing the country. He wanted to emulate the example of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Turkey, but forgot that while Turkey had been in touch with Europe for centuries, Afghanistan was in many ways still in the Middle Ages. Tribal leaders did not relish the idea of being put into frock coats and top hats and lectured to by an impetuous young man, nor did the mullahs approve the picture of Queen Suraiya in her transparent Parisian costumes. Disaffection gathered pace. Curiously enough, it found a leader in a water-carrier's brat, Bachai Sakao, who raised the standard of revolt and drove Amanulla out of Afghanistan. Some weeks later, Nadir Khan, the King's uncle, entered Afghanistan, defeated Bachai Sakao, who had proclaimed himself Amir, and established the present dynasty. All these events were watched by us on the Frontier with great interest. The exit of Amanulla and the entry of Nadir Shah took place through Indian territory, and we had to make elaborate administrative arrangements with the greatest care and secrecy.

To return to the Simon Commission. The Commission was received with fewer black flags in Peshawar than elsewhere. It travelled conscientiously from one end of India to the other, meeting the representatives of the people, talking with them, taking down their evidence and collating it all; and it produced a report which was exactly the kind of report which one would have expected from Sir John Simon. Churchill once said that Simon had sat so long on the fence that the iron had entered his soul. He had a brilliant intellect, but lacked sympathy, imagination and vision. It was the lack of these qualities which made him the worst Foreign Secretary England had ever had—a distinction to which his absolute title came under dispute after the Suez adventure of 1956. The report of the Simon Commission was a masterly analysis of the situation in India,

but its recommendations, like the soul of its author, were clad in iron. The result was that the report was still-born; it became out of date as soon as it was published. There followed the vicious circle of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, repression and round-table conferences.

The Simon Commission's recommendations about the North-West Frontier were almost entirely negative. The Commission failed to realize that the frontier of 1930 was different from Kipling's frontier of 1900. Below the tranquil surface even of the administered districts, deep currents had been moving. The Commission ignored them and recommended that no changes be made in the government of the North-West Frontier. Other Indian provinces were to be given provincial autonomy; the NWFP was to be denied even that. Yet before long the Government of India was compelled to introduce diarchy into the NWFP, to transfer certain subjects to popularly elected Ministers, to appoint a Chief Minister and to transform the Chief Commissioner into a constitutional Governor. This was the result of popular agitation culminating in a serious revolt in Peshawar city. Then there was the extraordinary spectacle of Pathans, who had been inured to violence for centuries, displaying, under the influence of the Frontier Gandhi, their bare chests to the soldiers, and the soldiers of an Indian regiment refusing to shoot and inviting court martial.

Thus the Red Shirts showed that they were something more than Pathan wolves in Gandhian sheep's clothing. This was a situation which the Chief Commissioner, Sir Norman Bolton, had not been trained to cope with. He had, or was said to have had, a nervous breakdown and was packed off hurriedly to England. Younger and abler men like Sir Ralph Griffith and Sir Olaf Caroe took charge of the situation and crushed the 'rebellion'. The Central Government, however, could not leave the NWFP in the air. It was compelled to introduce a measure of reform, far beyond anything which the Simon Commission had contemplated.

I was not an eye-witness to these dramatic events. A few months before they occurred I was transferred to Ceylon. On my way down, I met Mrs Sarojini Naidu in Bombay and had

an interesting talk with her. I had met her already at a conference of Indian students in Swanwick in 1921. I had been charmed by her; and she, I think, liked me. At a fancy dress competition she dressed me up in her own sari. Later, she spoke to the Oxford Majlis, of which I was President. The substance of that speech I have forgotten, but the style was sheer poetry. I also heard her speak, more eloquently than poetically, at a banquet given by the Majlis in honour of the first Ambassador of independent Afghanistan in London. Later I used to see her in her charming house, the 'Golden Threshold', in Hyderabad, where I often played bridge with her husband, Major-General Naidu.

On my way from Peshawar to Colombo, I met Mrs Naidu in her rooms in the Taj Mahal Hotel. She was a delightful talker. She had forsaken poetry for politics, but even in the tensest moments she retained her sense of humour. She was the one person who could be irreverent to Mahatma Gandhi, and used to call him 'Mickey Mouse'. Once she told him that he did not seem to realize how much it cost the nation to keep him in poverty. Sometimes her humour passed beyond the limits of decorum. When Rajaji was Governor of Bengal, he showed her round Government House. He took her to his enormous bedroom and showed her his enormous bed and asked, 'What is the use of all this to me, a septuagenarian widower?' 'There, there,' said Mrs Naidu. 'I have come to your help on many occasions, but this time I can't.'

If Mrs Naidu was a delightful talker, she could also make others talk. When I met her in Bombay she made me talk of life on the Frontier and its excitements. The next time that I saw her, she told me that she had been so thrilled by what I said that, when she was taking a bath soon after our talk, a whole poem came into her head and wrote itself and that she was going to dedicate it 'To KPS from my bath'. Here is that poem:

Afridi Song[1]

Wolves of the mountains,
Hawks of the hills,
We live or perish
As Allah wills.

Two gifts for our portion
We ask thee, O Fate,
A maiden to cherish,
A kinsman to hate.

Children of danger,
Comrades of death,
The wild scent of battle
Is breath of our breath.

Yet sweet in the dusk haze
When conflict has ceased,
When red feuds are sated
And honour appeased.

Aloft in our watch-towers
To rest, to regale
Our hearts with gay laughter
Of ballad and tale.

And sweet in the stillness
And fragrance of night
To find for our pillow
Twin moons of delight.

To find for our curtain
A tent of dark kisses,
And crowning our valour
A wreath of caresses.

[1] A slightly different version appears under the title of 'A Song of the Khyber Pass' in *Feather of the Dawn* (Asia Publishing House, 1961).

Wolves of the mountains,
Hawks of the hills,
We live or perish,
As Allah wills.

To have stirred the Nightingale of India to a song was perhaps the best outcome of my stay on the North-West Frontier.

8

CEYLON

IN THE MIDDLE of 1929 Sir Norman Bolton was asked by the Government of India to recommend an officer of about 10 to 12 years' seniority to conduct the census of the North-West Frontier Province in 1931. Sir Norman recommended my name, adding that though I had only six years' seniority I had the requisite qualifications, including what he called 'a literary flair'. At the same time, the Department of the Government of India dealing with Indians Overseas asked for my services as Agent of the Government of India in Ceylon. I had begun to like the Frontier and would have preferred to stay on there, but the appointment in Ceylon, I was told, carried a pay of Rs. 1,750 against Rs. 1,150 for the Frontier appointment. Our family was growing; we had a child or two to commemorate our stay in each of the stations we had been at. Ammini was the product of Trichinopoly, Kunja of Tiruppattur, our twin girls, Malati and Malini, of Hyderabad ; and now a set of twin boys, Kumar and Shankar, had arrived in Peshawar. To a man in the sixth year of his service with six children, a difference of Rs. 600 in his emoluments was not negligible. So we went to Ceylon.

Herbert Thompson, the City Magistrate at Peshawar, however, said that the real reason for my transfer was that the garrison was not strong enough to protect our family! I had the laugh on him a little later when he himself became the father of twins. He was then holding the post of District Judge, Peshawar, as I myself had held it temporarily. A predecessor of ours, Kealy, also fathered twins, so much so that the ribald Pathans professed to discover a connexion between the District Judge's chair and its incumbents' fertility. Another officer of the Foreign and Political Department who fathered twins was Sir Denis Bray, Foreign Secretary to the Government of of India, whose census report of Baluchistan for 1910 is still regarded as a classic, blending dry statistics with mellow

humour. He was cleverer than Herbert Thompson and myself, for he had insured against twins and got a tidy sum on their arrival.

We left Peshawar for Ceylon by train. It was a strange journey. A ticket collector entered our compartment at Lahore and found that there were eight of us with only three tickets. He thought I was trying to cheat the railway. Actually, we needed only three tickets, because four of our children—the two sets of twins—were below three and could therefore travel free, and the other two, being below 12, needed only half-tickets. Each pair had an ayah, but Nani Amma was in overall command.

Nani Amma, now 94, has served our family for three generations. She had been a playmate of Anujee's mother; and when Anujee got married she joined us and looked after our children. When we went to China in 1943 we had to leave her behind, but then she had our grandchildren to look after. She was devoted to our children and grandchildren; she herself had none. One day, in Tiruppattur, when we returned from a dinner party at the Sathes, Anujee caught Nani Amma trying to put Ammini to sleep by giving her her breast to suck and thus probably satisfying her own unfulfilled maternal instinct. I was sorry when Anujee gave her a sound scolding.

We used to call Nani Amma the queen of the nether world. She made herself the head of all our servants. What an army of servants one employed in those spacious days! Our domestic establishment consisted of a cook, a bearer, an assistant bearer, a masalchi, a chauffeur, a sweeper, a chowkidar, a gardener and, when necessary, a water-carrier, a punkah puller and four rickshaw-wallahs. Nani Amma was a terror to them all. She was always the first to rise in the household and the last to retire at night. Throughout the day she kept a vigilant eye on every aspect of the servants' work. If a cigarette was missing from the case in the drawing-room, she would come to know and trace the culprit. If a glass of whisky went down the wrong throat, Nani Amma would smell out the offender. Yet the servants respected her and liked her; and

even our Pathan servants bowed to her imperious will. One day she was bitten by a scorpion. This gave her much pain, and at about midnight I went out to see how she was feeling. There she was in the centre of the courtyard, under a starlit sky, with all the servants in a circle around her, sympathizing with her and telling her stories to cheer her up.

Nani Amma travelled up and down with us all over India. She was happy with us. The only thing she did not like was to wear a blouse; she had never worn one in Malabar. At first, she was stubborn and declined to wear one; and it was not until we threatened that we would refuse to take her with us to the Frontier unless she wore a blouse that she gave in. But whenever we went on leave to Malabar, as soon as we crossed the Western Ghats into Palghat, she would throw off her blouse and be gloriously free.

Nani Amma was completely illiterate, and her notions of geography were vague. When we went to Ceylon, the place looked so much like Malabar that she asked whether it was really necessary for her to put on her blouse. Ceylon was indeed like Malabar; nowhere else in India or outside have I felt so completely at home. After three years on the Frontier, so bleak and bare, it cooled the eyes and gladdened the heart to see the tropical vegetation of Ceylon—the tall coconut trees, the slender areca-nut, the waving banana and the spreading mango trees; the tea, rubber and coco estates; the herbs and ferns, the crotons and orchids. If Nani Amma felt like discarding her blouse, I felt like discarding my coat, shirt and trousers, and putting on just a loin-cloth, which indeed I did during my siesta in the afternoon. At night, however, I always wore western-style pyjamas. This was symbolic of the double life I had to lead in the ICS—'heaven-born' and earth-bound, a sahib and a native, a sun-dried bureaucrat and a man of the people.

We spent four years in Ceylon. The longer we stayed there, the more we were enchanted by its beauty. Our first railway journey, from Polgahawela to Kandy, gave us a glimpse of

its verdant charm and made us wonder which were more beautiful, the plains or the uplands of Ceylon. The road journey from Kandy to Colombo was equally delightful. I must have driven over this road a hundred times. Every time I felt as if I was driving through the Garden of Eden with a dozen Eves, quite needlessly clothed, sitting by the roadside and selling sugarcane, cashew-nuts, tender coconuts and that delicious but foul-smelling aphrodisiac, the durian. The drive from Kandy to Nuwara Eliya was less intimate but grander. You pass Ramboda, with its gurgling waterfall, over a road with a hundred bends, including a dozen hairpin ones, and through hills covered with tea, to that queen of hill stations. From Nuwara Eliya you descend tortuously into Welimada which, the rest-house keeper would tell you with a twinkle in his eye, is called 'Little England' because of the number of blue-eyed babies there, and the population of which he would provide you with facilities for increasing if you were so inclined. Equally interesting is the drive to the ancient capital, Anuradhapura, through thick forests threatening to encroach on the road and submerge it. One night I was driving with two friends on this road when a car came shooting down from the opposite direction and the British occupants shouted, 'Don't go on, there are elephants on the road.' This was a frequent occurrence, especially after a rainy day, when the elephants, unable to bear the disagreeable drip of the water from the trees, came on to the road and sometimes attacked or even overturned cars. We therefore beat a hasty retreat to Kandy.

In fashioning Ceylon, nature seems to have let herself go. Ceylon has everything—hills and peaks, woods and forests, downs and dales, plains and meadows; and this beautiful mosaic is set in the silver sea. At the gateway to Ceylon should appear the Persian couplet inscribed by Shah Jehan at the entrance to the Diwan-i-Khas in the Red Fort in Delhi: 'If there be a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this!'[1]

It is not, however, good for men to be always living in Paradise. Bishop Heber wrote:

[1] Agar Fardaus bar ru-i-zamin ast,
Hamin ast wa hamin ast wa hamin ast.

What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
Though every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.

The Reverend Bishop must have been in a liverish mood then, for there is no epithet less appropriate to the people of Ceylon than 'vile'. If he had said 'easy-going' or 'happy-go-lucky', I would have agreed with him. I could not help contrasting the people of Ceylon with the people of the Frontier where I had just spent three years. The tribesmen on the Frontier cannot afford to be easy-going. Unlike the Ceylonese, who are born to live and die in the arms of a benevolent nature, the Pathans have to wage a constant struggle with nature merely to keep alive. When two Pathans meet, one says, *Stadai mashe*, 'May you never be tired!' and the other replies, *Khwar mashe*, 'May you never be poor!' These are the two things which the Pathan dreads most, fatigue and poverty. In Ceylon, too, there is poverty, but poverty in that tropical climate is not so unbearable as on the Frontier, where one needs more clothing, more food, and more stamina to survive the extremes of the climate. As for fatigue, the Ceylonese are—or were—content to leave the most fatiguing kinds of work to foreigners. That explained the presence of 800,000 Indians in Ceylon and my own presence to look after them.

When Englishmen started opening up the Island, and especially the uplands of Ceylon, by planting coffee, rubber and tea, they needed labour which was at once cheap, docile and regular. What easier than to draw it from the less fertile districts of the Madras Presidency where the teeming millions lived on the verge of starvation? These labourers—or coolies as they were called—were recruited on terms distinctly favourable to the employers, under the notorious indenture system, which tied a labourer down to his estate for life. In the twentieth century, Indian public opinion became increasingly alive to the lot of their countrymen overseas. The Government of India abolished the indenture system, took power to regulate, control or even forbid emigration and obtained the right to appoint

an Agent of the Government of India in Ceylon to look after the interests of Indian immigrants, and particularly Indian labourers. I was the third incumbent of this post.

Kandy, the centre of the planting district in Ceylon, was my headquarters. For four years I was perpetually on the move, visiting estates, talking to the labourers as well as to the managers and trying to redress their complaints. I found many enlightened men in the planting community; and on the whole they were cooperative. But when the great depression of 1932 hit Ceylon and the prices of tea and rubber collapsed and some estates had to be closed down and others only just managed to keep their heads above water, there arose an outcry for the abrogation of the minimum wage of Indian labourers. This wage had been fixed at 50 cents for men, 40 for women and 30 for children, after years of discussion and consultation between the Governments of India and Ceylon and the India Office and the Colonial Office.

The position taken up by the planters was that now that the profits of the estates had gone down and the salaries of managers, superintendents and clerks had to be cut, there was no reason why the wages of Indian labourers alone should be treated as sacrosanct. My reply was that the minimum wage was after all a minimum wage—a wage below which a labourer could not maintain his way of living, low enough as it was already in all conscience; and that if the employers were unable to pay even the minimum wage, it was better for our labourers to return to India, and that we would rather have our people starve in India than outside. After all, the labourers did not share the fabulous profits from tea and rubber in the days of their prosperity, and there was no reason why they should lose their hard-won minimum wage when adversity hit the estates. The planters were unconvinced by this argument and the Government of Ceylon tacitly supported them, but the Government of India stood firm and the minimum wage was saved.

In Ceylon, there were also some Indians who stood in a category different from Indian labour. The most affluent among them were the Chettiars. Bankers, moneylenders and money-makers, the Chettiars transacted their business mostly in Sea Street, nicknamed the street of gold. They never made

Ceylon their home and did not bring their women with them. The Ceylonese complained that they had no interest in the Island and that their only concern was to make money and send it to India.

The Indian traders in Ceylon came mostly from the Madras Presidency. From Tuticorin, the port nearest to Ceylon, came the well-known firm of F. X. Pereira and Sons. I. X. Pereira, the head of the firm in my time, was highly respected; and, in accordance with my recommendation, the Government of India bestowed on him the title of Dewan Bahadur. Some sections of the Ceylonese press took this to be a confirmation of their complaint that even long-established concerns like F. X. Pereiras looked upon India, and not Ceylon, as their home. A remarkable Indian who had done well in Ceylon was a Moplah from Malabar, one Umbichi. With only a few annas in his pocket, he went as a young man to Ceylon, but now he was worth lakhs of rupees. His wealth came from the import of a single commodity, fish from the Maldive Islands, which gave a delicious flavour to Ceylon curries. Though he was rolling in wealth, he kept his simple habits, never used a car and still went about in a rickshaw.

Another unpopular group of Indians were the Malayalis, or Kochiyans, as they were called. They made excellent domestic servants and were also employed in large numbers by the Municipal Council and the harbour authorities. They, too, did not bring their women with them—indeed, even in Malabar, it was not the practice for the Malayali woman to go and live with her husband; he had to go to her—but the Malayalis often took Sinhalese women whom they treated with the consideration natural to men belonging to a matrilineal society. This very consideration, which made them desirable in the eyes of local women, made them disliked by local men.

The fact is that the Sinhalese in certain strata of society, especially in the southern part of the island, were inclined to take life too easily and to avoid hard work. It was this that necessitated the import of labour from India to work in the plantations. It was this, again, which enabled the shrewd Chettiar and the hard-working Tuticorin merchant to wax rich in Ceylon. Their very frugality was an eyesore to the

Sinhalese, who lived well and often beyond their means. On my arrival in Ceylon from the Frontier I was astonished to observe that even the tribesmen of the Frontier exploited the weaknesses of the Ceylonese. There was a large number of so-called Afghan moneylenders, most of whom came from certain villages in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. I came to know one of them. I wanted to keep up my knowledge of Pushtu and therefore sought out a Pathan who came to my house regularly once a week and conversed with me in Pushtu. His name was Kabir Bai and, wherever we met, he used to embrace me in the Pathan fashion. The Ceylonese thought this strange; they did not mind borrowing money from the Afghans, but socially they kept them at arm's length. Seeing the familiarity between me and Kabir Bai, a Ceylonese friend went to Rama Kurup, our chauffeur, and asked him why I, who seemed so well-paid, should borrow from the Afghans. That was the only relationship the Ceylonese could think of. One day, Kabir Bai saw me buying a train ticket from Kandy to Colombo. He told me that there was no need for me to buy a ticket because if I travelled with him a ticket would be unnecessary. Almost the entire railway staff was in debt to the Afghans and shut their eyes when their creditors travelled without tickets. These Afghans, who were Muslims, charged fabulous rates of interest, though according to the Koran usury was a sin.

One day, Kabir Bai came to me and told me that he wanted my advice on a delicate matter. A Ceylonese woman was in love with him and, he sheepishly admitted, he too was in love with her. She was the wife of a police officer and had six children, but was still charming. A few days later, she herself came and saw me. She was more forthright than Kabir Bai and said she could not live without him. Would I advise her to go with him to the Frontier? I told her that it was for her to make up her mind herself, but I told her of the hard conditions on the Frontier and the difficulties she was certain to encounter. I heard subsequently that she went to the Frontier with Kabir Bai, but returned to Ceylon, a physical and mental wreck.

Kabir Bai's entanglement was of course an unusual incident, but the Indian community as a whole constituted a minor problem for both India and Ceylon. There were some persons who would have liked to turn this minor problem into a major one and who made out that the Indians were the real exploiters of the people. In reality, the major problem for Ceylon and India and all South-East Asia was foreign domination. When that ended, all other problems would fall into their place and begin to be tackled with a sense of proportion. That, at any rate, was our optimistic hope.

It was clear to me that the so-called Indian problem was not capable of any immediate solution. To exalt its importance and to make a frontal attack on it would only make it worse. In dealing with it, I followed the sound advice of Talleyrand to diplomats: *pas trop de zele*. I spent less time in tackling the Indian problem than in cultivating the goodwill of the people of Ceylon, for it was only in an atmosphere of goodwill that the problem could eventually be considered in a dispassionate manner. I cultivated this friendship, not for an ulterior purpose, but primarily for its own sake. I felt that the Ceylonese were flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood. Though 25 miles of water separated India and Ceylon and though politically each would always remain a separate entity, they were culturally and spiritually one. I felt specially happy in the company of students and professors. I visited scores of schools and colleges and addressed them. I owe to Ceylon a permanent debt; it was Ceylon which drew out such talents as I possessed for public speaking. Looking back 30 years on my time in Ceylon, I am astonished at the range and variety of the subjects on which I spoke—Rabindranath Tagore, The Nightingale of India, The Rebirth of Nations, Religion and Dictatorship, A Hero for Truth, The Evolution of Law, Life and Literature, Anatole France, Kalidasa's Place in Sanskrit Literature, The Indian Machiavelli, Life at Oxford, Memories of the English Stage, Parodies on Progress, The Taj Mahal—a Landmark or an Epitome?, The North-West Frontier, Morality in Politics and so on. I was in great demand at the YMCA and the YMHA, at debating societies, college anni-

versaries and Rotary clubs. The strangest request I received was from a padre who said that he had been contemplating an extension to his Church and asked whether I, in aid of this project, would give a lecture and let him charge an entrance fee of 50 cents per head.

Once or twice my speeches got me into trouble with the Government of India. I received three mild reprimands in quick succession, two of them from an Indian Secretary to the Government of India. I must say that these were the only three reprimands which I got in my nearly 40 years' service, 25 of which were spent in British days. The Government of India must have been fully aware of my nationalist leanings. But they had the sense to realize that in those days it was impossible to find any Indian with spirit who was not nationalist at heart. Only some Indians flaunted their patriotism, others cherished it discreetly and some others concealed it carefully.

While speaking on Tagore and Mrs Sarojini Naidu, I naturally stressed their burning patriotism and their abhorrence of imperialism. Tagore once described imperialism as 'the organized gregariousness of gluttony'. He deplored the spread of imperialistic tendencies even to an Asian country like Japan. 'Japan', he said, 'has shown that the bloodhounds of Satan can be bred not only in the kennels of Europe, but domesticated in Asia and fed with man's miseries.' I read out Tagore's letter to Lord Chelmsford, renouncing his knighthood in protest against 'the enormity of the measures taken by the Government' to quell the riots in the Punjab in 1919. 'The time has come', he said, 'when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.' One day I received a letter from Girja Shankar Bajpai, Secretary to the Government of India, drawing my attention to certain passages in my speeches and asking me to be more careful in the future.

On another occasion, Bajpai wrote to me that it was indiscreet on my part to have put up Professor Mujeeb, who had delivered a number of anti-British speeches in Ceylon. I explained that

Mujeeb was an old and dear friend of mine from our Oxford days. He had come to Ceylon to collect funds for the Jamia Millia Islamia, a Nationalist Muslim University, of which he was the mainstay; and I could not possibly gag him or refuse to put him up. All the time Mujeeb stayed with me in Kandy, a measly detective used to hang about my house in various disguises which were only too transparent. Finally, Mujeeb and I left Kandy together in our car for Colombo. As soon as we emerged from the house, I stopped in front of the detective and thanked him, to his confusion, for keeping so vigilant an eye on my friend and gave him our address in Colombo.

When I was in Ceylon news began to come of the rise of the Red Shirts and other dramatic events in the city of Peshawar. The Government of India appointed a Committee of Enquiry and published its report. The Indian National Congress also appointed a Committee of Enquiry. I wrote to the Secretary of the Congress and asked for a copy of the Committee's report, which was highly critical of the Government's repressive policy. That letter was intercepted and I received a letter from Sir Evelyn Howell, Acting Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, saying that my letter to the Secretary of the Congress had reached the notice of the Government of India. 'Presumably no harm was meant', wrote Howell, 'and certainly no harm has been done, but I am directed to point out that your conduct was distinctly indiscreet and easily liable to grave misconstruction.' Looking at this incident from the British standpoint and considering that the Government and the Congress were engaged in a bitter struggle for power, I must admit that this reprimand was mildly worded.

The most memorable moment in my four years' stay in Ceylon was when I set my eyes on the man who, next only to Mahatma Gandhi, was responsible for bringing British rule to an end. One day I was sitting on a bench on Upper Lake Road. In front of me was a feast of beauty, the like of which I have seen in few other parts of the world. There was a lovely lake nestling among picturesque hills. Beyond it was a maidan where a vast concourse of people was gathering to hear Jawahar-

lal Nehru. I would have liked to be at that meeting, but that would have been 'indiscreet' and 'easily liable to grave misconstruction'. I therefore sat where I was, struggling with my thoughts. A couple of hours later, I heard a rumbling of cars coming up the hill. One of the cars stopped near me; and a good friend of mine, George de Silva, got out and introduced me to Jawaharlal Nehru. I felt as if an idol had suddenly come to life, for Nehru was the idol of Indian youth, including even members of the ICS. 'What!' said Nehru, 'Meditating! A good spot for it!' If, at that moment, he had touched my shoulder and said, 'Follow me!', I would have done so. In that case I would not have had the privilege of serving him as the first Foreign Secretary in the Republic of India, and I might even have been in danger of becoming a Cabinet Minister!

Nearly 30 years passed before I revisited Ceylon. In 1962 I went on a lecture-tour sponsored by the Government of India, the subject of my lectures being 'Changing Patterns of Life in Asia'.

The pattern of life in Ceylon had indeed changed. Like India, Ceylon was frantically working towards a socialistic pattern of society. Unfortunately, society seemed split into two by a wave of Sinhalese nationalism and an unfortunate language controversy which embittered the relations between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Tamils as well as Sinhalese, however, vied with one another in welcoming us into their midst, and we were happy to revive our friendship with many old friends, such as the redoubtable Suntharalingam, always ploughing a lonely furrow in politics; the scholarly Malalasekara, who for the time being has forsaken scholarship for diplomacy; the very able Vythianathan, once a prop of the Government and now in impotent revolt against it; and Mrs Margaret de Soysa, mourning the good old days of capitalism. I missed my old friend from my undergraduate days at Oxford, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who in the thirties had been the stormy petrel of Ceylon politics and eventually became Prime Minister. A year or two ago he was killed by a Buddhist fanatic. His dynamic spirit, however, seemed still to be ruling

Ceylon through his gracious wife, then the Prime Minister. I was greatly touched when she presented me with a beautifully produced volume of her husband's speeches and writings and drew my attention to a passage in which he referred to our friendship at Oxford and our long talks.

When I read this passage, forty years fell away and I found myself on the banks of the Isis or the Meadows of Christ Church, walking arm-in-arm with 'Banders', the most gifted undergraduate of our time, and talking of the shape of things to come. The things to come included, in our eye, the independence of India and Ceylon, which Bandaranaike had himself done much to bring about, but it did not include his assassination any more than Gandhiji's.

9

ZANZIBAR

THE YEAR 1934 began badly for us. Anujee lost her father. Sir Sankaran Nair was a grand old man, noted for his stubborn independence. The motto of my college in Madras was :

> They are slaves who dare not be
> In the right with two or three.

Sir Sankaran was a living illustration of this motto. The only Indian in the Viceroy's Executive Council, he stood up to seven stalwart Englishmen and, when disagreement with the Viceroy and his colleagues over the martial law regime in the Punjab reached its peak, he resigned. He also stood up against a more invincible force, Mahatma Gandhi. An admirer of Gladstone, who was at the height of his glory in Sir Sankaran's student days, and a convinced believer in constitutional methods, he honestly felt that Gandhiji, with his revolutionary tactics such as non-cooperation and civil disobedience, was leading India to chaos. He wrote a peevish book, called *Gandhi and Anarchy*, which had a strange fate. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, whom Sir Sankaran had severely criticized for his atrocities as Governor of the Punjab, brought a libel action against him and won it. Gandhiji later showed his magnanimity by sending a generous telegram of condolence on Sir Sankaran's death.

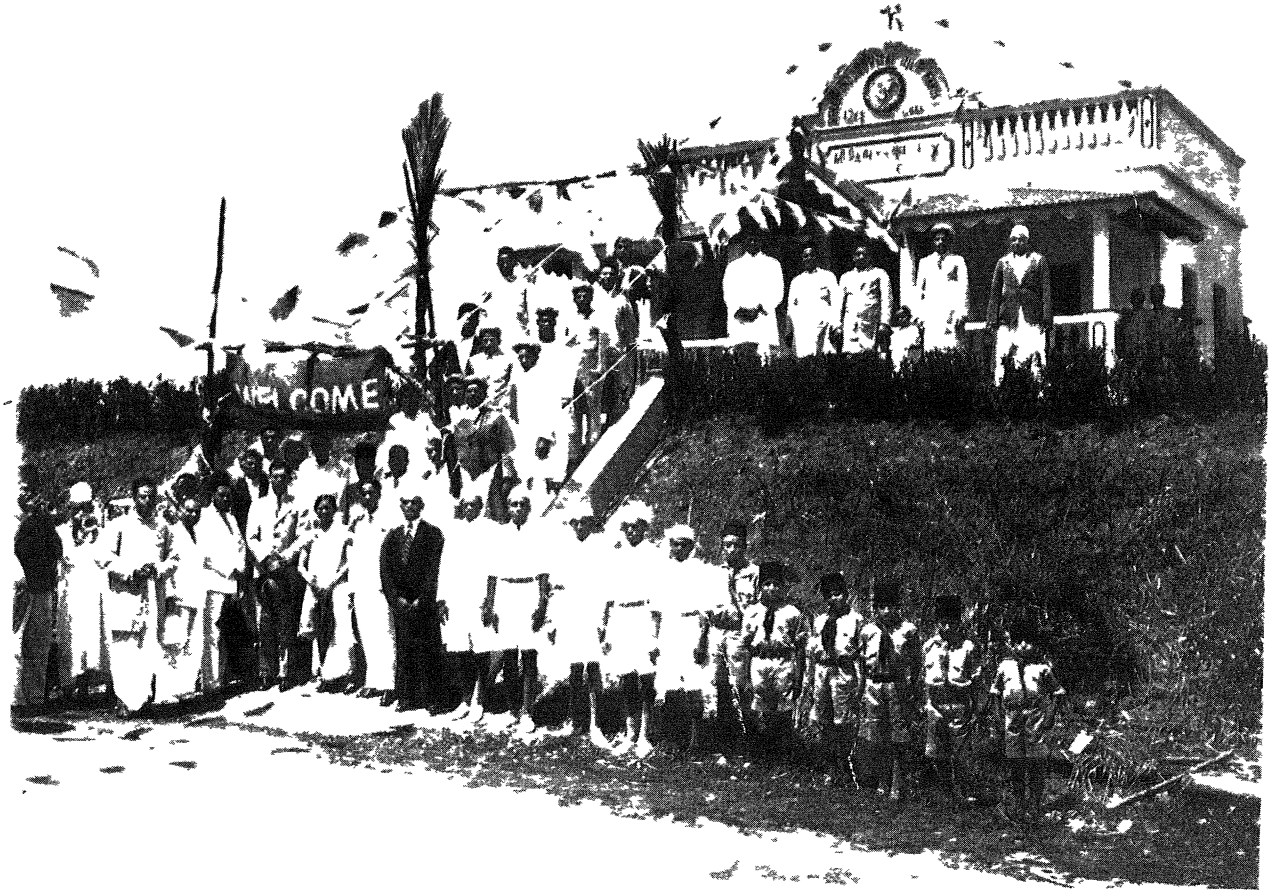
In 1934 Anujee lost not merely her father, but two of her brothers-in-law, and nearly lost her husband. While Sessions Judge in Peshawar, I was stricken with an attack of smallpox, and three of our children got it from me. During our illness, Anujee's stature rose in my eyes to heroic proportions. Unafraid, unaided, refusing even to have a nurse, she saw four invalids through a terrible disease. After I had recovered I looked into a mirror and was shocked to see my face, it was so horribly pock-marked. But there were no permanent scars

because as soon as I fell ill Col. Sahibzada, the kindest of doctors, gave Anujee an ointment to be applied to my face every half-hour, saying, 'If he recovers, let not his face be worse than it is!'

Smallpox brought my tenure as Sessions Judge to an abrupt end. I had had time to sentence only two individuals to death—a man and his sister, who kept a young girl for immoral purposes and, when she started demanding a fairer share of her earnings, brutally did away with her. For me it was a tense moment when I decreed that two human beings should live no longer; and I thought that the man or at least the woman would show some signs of emotion. But when I pronounced my judgment that 'the accused shall be hanged by the neck till they are dead', both of them simultaneously said, *Shukr de, Sahib*, 'Thank you, Sir,' and walked out of the court with an air of bravado. But for my timely attack of smallpox, I would have had to sentence many more persons to death. Summer was coming, and in the summer there used to be three times as many murders as in the winter, partly because the heat was oppressive and tempers became frayed, and partly because people slept out in the open and had greater opportunities for murdering their enemies. Some years later, as Political Agent in Baluchistan, I had to try scores of murder cases—the average in my district was 365 a year or one a day—but mercifully they were tried under the Frontier Crimes Regulation which precluded the penalty of death.

The Government of India was good enough to give me a voyage to Zanzibar to complete my convalescence after I had recovered from smallpox. I sailed from Bombay on an official mission in the first week of July, together with a competent secretary, K. G. Nair, who was also a good companion and was subsequently to accompany me to China and Korea. The object of my deputation was to inquire into the conditions of Indians in Zanzibar, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika.

The three months I spent in East Africa were amongst the most crowded in my life. During this period I covered 4,000 miles by every available means of locomotion, by boat and



The author's welcome in Zanzibar, August 1934

by train, by road and by air. I spent three weeks in Zanzibar and in the sister island of Pemba, and then flew to Dar-es-Salaam, the capital of Tanganyika. From Dar-es-Salaam I again proceeded by air to Mombasa, the finest seaport on the east coast of Africa. Then I went by train to Nairobi, the beautiful capital of Kenya, almost on the equator. From Nairobi I motored over the Rift Valley into the gardenland of Uganda. I stood at the source of the river Nile, watched the Victoria Falls and circumnavigated Victoria Nyanza, the second largest freshwater lake in the world. I broke our voyage at Masaka and proceeded to Mwanza by car through the Serengeti plains, noted for its wild game. I met scores of officials and non-officials, received deputations, attended conferences, addressed meetings, inspected townships, and—what was perhaps the most difficult feat—survived dozens of Gujerati dinners.

The first place that I visited was Zanzibar. I was told that it was essentially an Arab town. It seemed to grow upwards and inwards rather than outwards. Not that there were any skyscrapers, as in New York, piercing the clouds, but here too the houses showed a vertical rather than a horizontal tendency. The streets were so narrow that one of them was called Suicide Alley. The houses literally crowded into one another and if inquisitively inclined one could watch one's neighbours in their most intimate activities. This gave the town of Zanzibar a friendly air. There was no racial segregation in Zanzibar. Arabs and Indians, Europeans and Swahilis lived together. No one, however rich or prosperous, dreamt of leaving this congested town and living outside in a separate house with a garden of its own. Even the dead seemed reluctant to leave Zanzibar. The Hindu High School, for instance, was situated on the spot on which negro slaves used to be beheaded, until slavery was abolished in 1897. The houses were surrounded by tombstones; and I met a lady, the French wife of the British Chief Justice of Zanzibar, who used to be as much afraid of ghosts in Zanzibar as of negroes in Uganda.

Zanzibar was a British Protectorate. I met the Sultan of Zanzibar more than once—a kindly old gentleman, a dignified

figurehead, who offered me cold sherbet, immediately followed by hot tea. His one royal function seemed to be to affix his signature to the decrees which were prepared by the British Resident in the name of Allah the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate.

Zanzibar was noted for its cloves. It produced 90 per cent of the world's supply. The first clove tree was planted in Zanzibar in the year 1835 by one of her greatest rulers, Syed Sultan. At that time he had a European Counsellor who advised him against the cultivation of cloves because the soil was better suited for the cultivation of sugarcane. Time has proved that the Arab's prescience was superior to the European's knowledge; when I was in Zanzibar there were barely a hundred acres of sugarcane while there were thousands of acres of cloves.

My main concern, too, was with cloves. In the middle of 1933 the Government of Zanzibar passed a number of Acts which were detrimental to Indian interests. The Indian community was in a state of panic. They were convinced that these decrees were part of a Machiavellian campaign to turn them out of the Island. They pointed to the racial character of the Land Alienation Act which forbade the sale of land, except with the Resident's permission, by Arabs and Africans to others. The word 'others' was a euphemism. 'Others' consisted almost entirely of Indians; there were only 72 Europeans. I was unable to support the objection of Indians to this decree. In some provinces in India itself, such as the Punjab, there were similar Acts, forbidding the transfer of land from the agricultural classes.

In a different category stood the decrees relating to cloves. Their principal feature was the creation of a Clove Growers' Association which was to have a practical monopoly in both the internal and external trade of the Island. The strange thing about the Clove Growers' Association was that it was not an association of clove-growers. There was not a single clove-grower in it. Nor was it an association; there was no membership apart from the Board of Management, which consisted of three or four European officials, the manager of the National Bank and one Bartlett, its secretary-manager,

who at one time used to compete unsuccessfully with Indians in the clove trade. When I inquired why such a body was called the Clove Growers' Association, I was told that it was so called because it genuinely represented the interests of clove-growers. 'As well', I retorted, 'might the Zanzibar Government call itself the Zanzibar People's Welfare Association!'

These decrees were particularly galling, because Indians in Zanzibar were not foreigners. They were not birds of passage. They had made Zanzibar their home. When I asked an old Indian trader how long it was since he had visited India he replied that he was there at the time of his circumcision. Indians had made Zanzibar what it was. They had financed the clove-growers; they had discovered markets for cloves; they had developed the clove trade from parochial into universal dimensions. Their part in the development, not merely of Zanzibar but of East Africa, was considerable. Braving the wrath of man and beast, they penetrated, long before Europeans appeared on the scene, into the interior of Africa carrying with them the elements of civilization. Let me quote from one who cannot be accused of partiality for Indians, Winston Churchill:

> It is the Indian banker who supplied perhaps the larger part of the capital yet available for business and to whom even the White settlers have not hesitated to go for financial aid. The Indian was here long before the first British officer. Is it possible for any Government with a scrap of respect for honest dealing between man and man to embark on a policy of deliberately squeezing out the native of India from regions in which he has established himself under every security of public faith?

In my report on Zanzibar, I made it clear that the effect of the decrees passed by the Zanzibar Government would be to squeeze out Indians from Zanzibar. Thereupon the Government of India took up the cudgels, though the only cudgel they could use was the polished pen of Girja Shankar Bajpai. The Government of India made representations to the Secretary of State for India; the Secretary of State for India made representations to the Secretary of State for Colonies; the

Secretary of State for Colonies wrote to the Resident in Zanzibar; the Resident in Zanzibar replied to the Secretary of State for Colonies; the Secretary of State for Colonies wrote to the Secretary of State for India; the Secretary of State for India made further inquiries from the Government of India. While this leisurely epistolatory game was going on, the condition of Indians in Zanzibar became desperate. In the meantime, my report was published. It was a revelation of the extent to which a Colonial Administration could disregard Indian interests. The Indian public now took up the matter; and Indian merchants boycotted cloves from Zanzibar. Bales of cloves lay idle in Bombay and Calcutta with no one caring to take delivery of them. India was in a strong position; she consumed 60 per cent of the cloves from Zanzibar. Her boycott of cloves had the desired effect. After some negotiation, the Zanzibar Government modified their decrees and came to an agreement with the Government of India under which Indian interests in Zanzibar were substantially safeguarded.

From Zanzibar we flew to Dar-es-Salaam. After the quaint, Arab, antique atmosphere of Zanzibar, there was something garish about Dar-es-Salaam. She bore on her face the marks of the genius as well as the limitations of Germans as colonizers. German officers walked about in Dar-es-Salaam with an almost proprietary air and German ships touching that port dispensed hospitality with both hands. I doubted whether all that hospitality flowed from the generosity of the German heart. The Nazi Government was talking of a plan to recapture their lost colonies; Hitler was praising the British who 'had taught Indians to walk'; and Mussolini was hatching plans to teach Abyssinians to walk!

From Dar-es-Salaam we flew to Mombasa. It had lovely bathing-places, though infested with crocodiles. I was somewhat reassured by being told that if a European and an Arab fell within the range of a crocodile, the crocodile always went for the European. Mombasa used to be a great entrepot of the world's trade in ivory, both white and black, 'black ivory' being a slang term for negro slaves. Arabs, Indians and

Europeans used to make huge fortunes out of the traffic in slaves. Why, that famous hymn, 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!' was composed by the master of a slave-trading ship while he was waiting in Mombasa to take away from the land of their birth scores of negro slaves collected from the interior.

From Mombasa I proceeded to Nairobi by train. We passed through a belt of tropical vegetation, then through a desert and finally through the luxuriant highlands of Kenya. The construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway was begun, despite Gladstone's opposition, in 1894 and completed in 1903. The line was laid almost entirely by Indian labour. Africans would not work on it. The line passed through country which used to be, and still is, the haunt of the lion. Africans knew the ways of this beast too well to offer themselves up as its victims. Thereupon the Colonial Office turned to the Government of India for assistance, and in 1900, 20,000 Indian labourers were on the job. The hardships and the horrors undergone by them make painful reading. They are related in that remarkable book, Patterson's *Man-eaters of Tsavo*. I was moved by the translation of a Hindustani poem, written by one of the Indian coolies who lived in momentary dread of being attacked and devoured by lions. Here is a passage from it:

I, Roshan, came to this country of Africa, and did find it indeed a strange land;
Many rocks, mountains, and dense forests abounding in lions and leopards;
Also buffaloes, wolves, deer, rhinoceroses, elephants, camels, and all enemies of man;
Gorillas, ferocious monkeys that attack men, black baboons of giant size, spirits, and thousands of varieties of birds;
Wild horses, wild dogs, black snakes, and all animals that a hunter or sportsman could desire.
The forests are so dark and dreadful that even the boldest warriors shrink from their awful depths.
Now from the town of Mombasa, a railway line extends unto Uganda;
In the forests bordering on this line, there are found those lions called 'man-eaters', and moreover these forests are full of thorns and prickly shrubs.

Portions of this railway from Mombasa to Uganda are still being made, and here these lions fell on the workmen and destroyed them.

Such was their habit, day and night, and hundreds of men fell victims to these savage creatures, whose very jaws were steeped in blood.

Bones, flesh, skin and blood, they devoured all, and left not a trace behind them.

Because of the fear of these demons some seven or eight hundred of the labourers deserted, and remained idle;

Some two or three hundred still remained, but they were haunted by this terrible dread,

And because of fear for their lives, would sit in their huts, their hearts full of foreboding and terror.

Every one of them kept a fire burning at night, and none dared to close his eyes in sleep; yet would some of them be carried away to destruction.

The lion's roar was such that the very earth would tremble at the sound, and where was the man who did not feel afraid?

On all sides arose weeping and wailing, and the people would sit and cry like cranes, complaining of the deeds of the lions.

I, Roshan, chief of my people, also complained and prayed to God, the Prophet, and to our spiritual adviser.

We spent a few days in Nairobi, the queen of the Highlands. Soon after the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway, Europeans started thronging into Kenya. The earliest European Association of which we have record was formed in 1903. There began the cry that the lands around Nairobi should be reserved for Europeans. The first to suffer were the Masai tribe. Unceremoniously they were turned out of their best lands. Then came the turn of the Kikuyus. They, too, were ejected. This was particularly heart-rending, because the Kikuyus were genuinely attached to the land. Within ten years the process of eviction was complete. But the events of this period rankled in the minds of the tribes. Driven from their natural moorings, removed from the restraints of their tribal society and introduced to a strange civilization, of which in the peculiar circumstances in Kenya they saw more

of the shadier than the bright side, the natives of Kenya became more and more demoralized. The ground was being prepared for Mau Mau.

The Europeans were not content with the exclusion of Africans; they wanted to exclude Indians too. In 1906 an Indian deputation, headed by A. M. Jivanji, who had presented a statue of Queen Victoria to Nairobi in the previous year, proceeded to England to report the grievances of the Indian community to the Colonial Office. The deputation was assured by Lord Elgin, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that 'it is not consonant with the views of His Majesty's Government to impose legal restrictions upon any section of the community in regard to the acquisition of land'. Nevertheless, the agitation against Indians was so great that in 1915 the Crown Lands Ordinance was passed empowering the Governor of Kenya to veto inter-racial transfers of land; and this veto was invariably exercised against the Indian. When I visited Kenya the European community, not content with this administrative discrimination, was clamouring for a statutory discrimination. They wanted the privileged position of the Europeans to be enshrined in an Order in Council.

Indians in Kenya were also subjected to various other disabilities. The settlers objected to a common electoral roll for Indians and Europeans. They clamoured for the drastic restriction of Indian immigration. They even attempted to segregate them not merely in residential but in commercial areas. And all this was done in the name of Christian civilization. The settlers reminded the King that he was 'Defender of the Faith'—'No empty title', they added, but one which made it incumbent on the King to protect 'the flower of Christian Faith, so recently planted in Eastern Africa', which otherwise might be choked by the quick growth of other Eastern religions.[1] When I was there, every opportunity was being taken to malign Indians. A woman who had been in India published a newspaper article in which she referred to Indian widows as 'mere children in years, the drudges of the household and the common property of the male members'. This remark drew a spirited protest from the Indian editor of *Democrat* in which he referred

[1] W. McGregor Ross, *Kenya from Within* (1927), p. 346.

disparagingly to the morals of European women. The editor was arrested, tried and deported. Two stalwart young Europeans entered a compartment in the train in which that saintly social reformer, Rev. C. F. Andrews, was travelling, taunted him with his Indian sympathies, slapped his cheek and set fire to his beard. Churchill, who was then Secretary of State for Colonies, expressed his severe reprobation of this cowardly attack.

It was a relief to go from race-ridden Kenya to Uganda. We motored from Nairobi to Entebbe through the Rift Valley. Beginning in Rhodesia, this valley runs northwards for some 3,500 miles through Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Abyssinia. Even the Red Sea and the Jordan Valley are regarded as its continuation. How it originated we do not know. Geologists say that by a slow process of compression an arch was set up on the face of the earth; some support gave way; the arch collapsed; and the result is this gigantic moat, embanked with parallel walls, which in some places reach a height of 6,000 feet above sea level and in other places, as in the bottom of the Dead Sea, drop to 2,500 feet below sea level. And as if to add to the weirdness of this scene, nature has dotted the Rift Valley with lakes, large and small, fresh and salt, and pimpled it with volcanoes, extinct and active. We motored along this valley, past the lakes of Naivasha, Nakuru and Victoria, into that African paradise, Uganda.

Uganda was one big garden. It was more beautiful than any other territory which I visited in East Africa. With its palm trees, tropical jungles and meandering streams, it was even more beautiful than the neighbouring territory of Kenya. It was more beautiful not merely in a physical but a moral sense. Here there was no segregation, no racial problem, no white man's settlement. Uganda escaped these evils because she had an army of mosquitoes—and patriotic mosquitoes, because they might spare a native, but they gave no quarter to an intruder and would strike him down with that deadly form of malaria called blackwater. I had to take 10 grains of quinine a day to guard myself against it.

Until recent years Uganda was totally inaccessible. It

was discovered by Speke in 1862, though Indian merchants had gone there much earlier. In fact, it was from Indian merchants that Speke came to know of the existence of the kingdom of Uganda. Until then, Africa was 'a dark continent' —so dark that, as Swift put it,

> . . . geographers, in Afric maps,
> With savage-pictures fill their gaps,
> And o'er unhabitable downs
> Place elephants for want of towns.

Entebbe was the capital of Uganda. It was, like New Delhi, a capital town pure and simple. Not far from it was Kampala, teeming, like Old Delhi, with life, turning up her nose, snapping her fingers at the supercilious splendours of her new-sprung neighbour. Proudly, like Rome, Kampala called herself the City of the Seven Hills. But more interesting than Kampala and Entebbe was a little town called Jinja, the scene of the world-famous Victoria Falls. There I saw the Nile starting off on her 3,600-mile journey to the Mediterranean. We saw the hippopotamus slowly and slyly emerging from its watery retreat, Victoria Nyanza. It took us a whole week to circumnavigate the lake. Sometimes it seemed a lovely lagoon, sometimes an open sea. Its shores were low in some places and fringed with papyrus, and in other places rose to a height of 3,000 feet. At Musoma we broke our voyage and motored over the Serengeti plains, where we saw hundreds of zebra and wild buck dribbling along the excellent road. We also saw Lake Nabagoba, near which many of the pictures for the film *Trader Horn* were taken. It was here that an obliging mosquito bit the leading lady and enabled her to claim heavy damages for her loss of beauty. The District Commissioner in Bukoba told me that the cameramen used to sprinkle wine on the grass to attract hippopotamus. And sure enough the hippos came! I had been told that the hippopotamus was a strict vegetarian and was relieved to learn that it was not a teetotaller.

The people of Uganda were more advanced than in the rest of Africa. Women are perhaps the best index to the state of any society. Among the Kikuyus in Kenya women were literally hewers of wood and drawers of water. I often saw women weighing barely 120 lb carrying a load weighing twice

as much. I was told that the more robust among them did not find it difficult even to carry a piano. The Baganda women were different. With their chocolate skins, close-cropped heads, beautifully shaped shoulders and soft rounded features, they had a lure of their own.

All the tribes in Africa had one thing in common—their sense of rhythm. They loved dancing. Even children were dancers. They seemed to dance out of their mother's wombs and go on dancing until they danced into their tombs. A dance which I saw in Kenya made me wonder whether it was an acrobatic feat, a sexual exercise or a magical performance.

In Kampala, I saw a magnificent exhibition of African dancing in which the court dancer of the Kabaka—the *prima ballerina*—took part. Accompanied by bells and rattles, the spectators shouting and shrieking, the women slapping their thighs, the dancers indulged in slow and elaborate convolutions of every member of their body. One of the dances ended in an orgy of drinking. Then the slow convolutions gave way to more frantic gestures. Men leapt high in the air and women strutted across the arena into the arms of some astonished onlooker. Another dance I saw was in celebration of the birth of a pair of twins. The dancers began by congratulating the parents on their fecundity and cracking ribald jokes at their expense, which the mother seemed to enjoy and the father, with a greater sense of masculine propriety, seemed to resent. Gradually the dance passed from the natural to the supernatural plane. Ribaldry yielded to solemnity and the musical chant became a wordless hum. I was told that the dancers were invoking the spirits of Birth and Death to forgive the parents for their complicity in an atrocious deed. I joined in this prayer, for I too needed forgiveness for having been the father of two sets of twins.

Writing in 1963 and looking back at my African journey in 1934, I am astonished to think how little anyone anticipated the exciting political developments which have taken place in Africa since. No one suspected that in another quarter of a century Africa—the Africa of the Africans—would be awake and astir, that a number of African States would spring into

independence, that the new term 'Afro-Asia' would enter the world's political vocabulary, or that the Afro-Asian nations would gain sufficient influence in a resurrected League of Nations to carry a unanimous vote against South Africa, censuring it for its racial policies.

In the thirties London was still the hub of the universe. Soon after my return from Africa, we took eight months' leave and almost automatically went to London. London, however, was not exactly a health resort in December. I took Anujee proudly to Oxford to show her the sights and in particular Christ Church and the Meadows and my own rooms overlooking them, but to my distress Oxford had changed. The town had invaded the gown. The place was full of cars, buses and lorries which simply did not exist at Oxford in my time. There were queues waiting to cross the streets, the bleat of motor-horns drowned the song of birds and one could no longer hear the bells whispering the last enchantment of the Middle Ages. However, the days we spent at Oxford formed the most interesting part of our stay in England.

Towards the end of December, we went to the continent in search of sunshine. There N. R. Pillai and his wife, Dinks, joined us in their car, and together we explored the Riviera, French as well as Spanish. We made Roquebrune, between Menton and Monte Carlo, our headquarters and motored at first to the east and then to the west. We took in our stride Milan, Venice and Cortina d'Ampezzo, and enjoyed the usual tourists' delights, the great cathedral in Milan, the 'tears of Christ' in Venice and the weird-looking Dolomites. Then we motored westwards, through Nîmes and Carcassonne, across the Pyrenees and along the Spanish Riviera, which seemed so unspoiled and unsophisticated as compared with its French rival, to Burgos, Barcelona, Madrid and Toledo, a few months before it was sacked in the Civil War.

At Barcelona we met an interesting Indian, Ramon (the Spanish form of Raman) Panikker. He went to England in the early part of the century as a student and happened to be a friend of Dhingra, the assassin of Sir Curzon Wylie, a member of the Secretary of State's Council. When Scotland Yard started making inquiries about Dhingra's associates, Panikker

fled to Spain. There he married a handsome Spanish woman and built up a big business, but his heart was still in India. It was touching to see how wistfully he spoke of his childhood in Malabar and of the relations, whom he had not seen for years and was not likely to see again, because as long as Britain remained in India there was no hope of his getting a passport. The tears welled up in his eyes when we recited some hymns which he too had learnt as a child. Truly, there is nothing so desolate as the heart of an exile, however prosperous he may be in a foreign land.

During my leave I picked up sufficient Sanskrit to be able to read the *Bhagavad Geetha* in original. I had already gained a smattering of Sanskrit by attending Professor Macdonell's Sanskrit classes at Oxford, but finding the grammar too hard, I abandoned Sanskrit for French. Now I tried to learn Sanskrit from Anujee. I learnt by heart a couple of hundred slokas from the Gita—a dozen or more from each chapter—which I still often recite to myself. The slokas I liked best were not those which soar into the region of metaphysics but those which are a guide and comfort to us frail mortals, walking and working in the valley of the shadow of death, and vaguely hoping, through good works and after a series of births, to triumph over death itself.

In reading the Gita I was impressed more than ever before by the greatness and tolerance of Hinduism. Which other religion would say about its custodians that 'the Brahmin who thinks that all truth is contained in the Vedas is like a man who thinks that all the water of the world is contained in a pond, when the whole countryside is overflowing with water'? And which God of any other religion would say that 'even those who worship alien gods, contrary to the scriptures, will eventually come to Me, provided they do so with faith'?

10

NEW DELHI

ON THE EXPIRY of my leave, I was appointed Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the department of Education, Health and Lands, which dealt among other matters with Indians overseas. 'Go and set the Jumna on fire,' said N. R. Pillai when he said goodbye to me in London. That was the spirit in which many an ambitious young man went to the central secretariat. N.R. himself had caused a minor conflagration in the Jumna as Under-Secretary; and for over 30 years he would go on setting the Jumna on fire—as Commerce Secretary, Cabinet Secretary and Secretary-General.

We sailed on a stately P & O ship, the *Viceroy of India*. It was sunk during the Second World War. The stately dignitary after whom it was named also became a war casualty, for there is little doubt that the war accelerated the advent of Indian independence and the replacement of the Viceroy by the President of India. The two world wars reduced the will and the power of Great Britain to defend the empire by the sword against insurgent peoples or to gloat, with Kipling, that

> If blood be the price of admiralty,
> Lord God, we ha' paid in full!

Moreover, they resurrected the spirit of liberalism, which has always been an ingredient in British public life. The first war resulted in the historic declaration of 1917 about Great Britain's goal in India; and the second resulted in the advent of the Labour government, determined to grant independence to India. Thus Great Britain discarded the burden of empire more gracefully than any other imperialist power has ever done in ancient or modern times.

These coming events had already begun to cast their shadow over India. In the middle thirties, however, New Delhi professed to ignore them or at least to treat them as a matter of

little consequence. My tenure in Delhi coincided with what might be called the Indian summer of British rule in India. The second non-cooperation campaign had been quelled, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were safely in jail, and Jinnah, who could be relied on to block the Congress, had reappeared on the Indian political scene. The revolutionary enthusiasm of the Congress, which showed a tendency to shoot up and down every decade, was now ebbing. The opponents of Indian independence hoped that it would not gather too much strength again. For the first time, the Congress was going to be harnessed to the chariot of Government, for it had accepted provincial autonomy on the principle, which it had hitherto spurned, that half a loaf was better than no bread, and before long Congress Ministries would come into power in most of the Provinces, though the Governors still possessed substantial powers. The Centre remained untouched. And Great Britain had taken care to see that if there should be any redistribution of power at the Centre, a Government would emerge in which the progressive and reactionary elements—the Congress, the Muslim League and the Princes—would nicely balance and neutralize one another, while the residuum of power remained in British hands. On the whole, in 1935 it looked as if the sun would never set on the British Empire.

Lord Willingdon presided over the Indian summer of British rule in India with great aplomb. His appointment was made amidst a chorus of approval. He came to Delhi with a great reputation; he had been a popular Governor of the two major provinces of India, Madras and Bombay, and a successful Governor-General of Canada. Indeed, in one of his first utterances as Viceroy, he expressed the hope that he would be the last to hold that post and the first to be a constitutional Governor-General on the pattern of the post he had just held in the Dominion of Canada. Never were words more idly spoken or more signally unfulfilled.

Why was Lord Willingdon so pronounced a success as Governor of Bombay and Madras and so dismal a failure as Viceroy? The chief reason is that Great Britain, having conceded provincial autonomy, was not in a mood to make any further political concessions to India. But there was also a

personal factor. Lord Willingdon was very susceptible to the atmosphere around him; he always followed the line of least resistance. In Madras and in Bombay, where he was Governor, provincial autonomy was at work, and the simplest course for him was to support the elected Ministers. But in Delhi the ICS was strongly entrenched both in the Viceroy's Council and in the Secretariat. By training and temperament the ICS believed that the first duty of the Government was to govern. Liberty may be desirable, but law and order must come first; otherwise it would degenerate into licence. And as for democracy, well,

> For forms of government let fools contest;
> Whate'er is best administered is best.

To the British, Mahatma Gandhi was a phenomenon. He might be personally sincere; he might even be a saint, as conceded by the high-minded judge, Broomfield, who sentenced him to six years' imprisonment; but the proof of the pudding lies in the eating, and Chauri Chaura showed where India would go if he was not curbed.

On the whole, the Viceroy's advisers in the ICS sincerely thought that any further acceleration of the pace of freedom would land India in chaos. Lord Willingdon did not have the superb courage of a Mountbatten, the burning sincerity of a Wavell or the Christian faith of an Irwin to rise above his surroundings. In his time the Central Secretariat was all in all. It could be quite sure that whatever proposal it sent up would be approved by the Viceroy. The papers submitted to him would come back with the bold initial 'W', or, more frequently, with the remark, 'H.E. approves', from Mieville, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy.

I remember a case which occurred in the department in which I myself was working and which showed how ready His Excellency was to approve anything that went up to him. Sir Raza Ali, the Agent of the Government of India in South Africa and an old widower, fell in love with an Indian woman in South Africa. She was of humble origin, having descended from a cooly, and used to earn her livelihood by keeping a sweetmeat shop. Bajpai, who was acting as Member of the

department concerned, took the view that this morganatic marriage on the part of the representative of the Government of India would not do and that, if Raza Ali persisted in his intention, he should be recalled. The file went up to Lord Willingdon with this recommendation and came back with the words, 'H.E. approves'. A few days later, the permanent Member, Sir Jagdish Prasad, took over the department. He thought that marriage was one's own affair and that there was no harm in Raza Ali marrying the girl of his choice and that this might even enhance the prestige of the Indian community in South Africa. He submitted a recommendation to the Viceroy that Raza Ali be given permission to marry; and the file came back with the words, 'H.E. approves'.

Lady Willingdon was a more dynamic character. She was looked upon and adjudged from different angles by Englishmen and Indians. Englishmen regarded her as a grand lady, who was charming and hospitable and at the same time kept up the prestige of the Viceregal Lodge and knew how to deal with Indians. She knew their unpronounceable names and had a full smile, a half-smile or a semi-frown for them, exactly as each deserved. She knew how to get things done; and her slightest whim had the force of a command. For instance, mauve was proclaimed as her favourite colour; wherever she went the walls, the curtains and the decorations were all changed into mauve. When her son, Lord Ratendone, visited New Delhi, a thoroughfare which had borne the name of one of the Lodi kings was renamed Ratendone Road, though he had no special claim to distinction.

I entered the Central Secretariat with considerable trepidation. I soon found that I was a cog in a mighty machine. It was run by men who, in their devotion to duty and in their proficiency in the arts of noting and drafting, had no peers anywhere. Yet how much, or how little, their hard work and their undoubted ability affected the dismal lives of the people of India is a question which not all paused to ponder. This was not their fault, but rather the fault of the system which they inherited. That system of government had been designed in and for the aristocratic nineteenth century, not for the century of the common man, and it had the backing of the political

philosophy of that age. John Stuart Mill, for instance, regarded that government as best which interfered least with the life of the individual. Such a system has been well described as 'anarchy plus policeman'. Compared with the welfare state of Great Britain and with the socialist pattern of society which independent India is now seeking to establish with the aid of her mighty Five-Year Plans, the Government of India in British days could indeed be called anarchy plus policeman. However, anarchy plus policeman was preferable to government by policemen, a pattern which was emerging in the thirties in many countries in Europe and Asia.

Looking back on the two and a half years I spent in Delhi and Simla, I cannot help thinking how complacent we officials used to be and how isolated we were from the people. Relaxing in the rarefied atmosphere of Simla, some of us developed a sense of superiority over our own colleagues in the ICS who had the misfortune to be working in the heat of the plains as Collectors or Sub-Collectors. Immersed in files, we were apt to lose touch with the realities of life. Yet the system was designed to forestall this danger. It was only after a man had spent a few years in the districts that he was taken to the centre; there he remained for a limited period, at the end of which he was expected to go back to district work; and a decent interval was supposed to elapse before he came back, if at all, to the centre. Thus the veins of the centre were expected to be constantly enriched by good provincial blood. But this wholesome rule was not always adhered to. Some officers, having come to the centre, would move heaven and earth to remain there. They got used to the superior amenities of Delhi and Simla and loved to bask in the Viceregal sunshine. If they succeeded in remaining at the centre, they began to think that they were indispensable. In some cases, it was not they, but their charming wives, who were indispensable.

I must confess that it was not Englishmen alone who were liable to catch this occupational disease, this lust to remain at the centre. Indians too, few as they were, were infected by it. Hydari, for instance, went to Delhi in 1925 and, except for a couple of years in Ceylon, remained there all his life until he went to Assam as Governor, went out shooting and died of

heart failure. In 1934 he was Joint Secretary to the department of Education, Health and Lands. The Secretary, too, was a confirmed Delhiwalla. Girja Shankar Bajpai had joined the department as an Under-Secretary in 1919, become successively Deputy Secretary and Joint Secretary, and when I joined the department he was Secretary to the Government of India and would before long become Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

Bajpai was one of the most able men in the ICS. He had all the arts and graces of a successful ICS man. Nature had endowed him with a handsome face and shining intelligence. He was always immaculately dressed and kept a fine house and a choice cellar. He was himself a good cook, a connoisseur of wines, and an expert in arranging menus in strict accordance with the status of his guests. He was as proud of his garden as of his house. He imported roses from England and planted them in No. 2, King George's Avenue, which subsequently became the British High Commissioner's residence. He was a polished speaker and a reliable spokesman of the Government in the Legislative Council. He had a flair for languages; he would speak French with the gestures of a Frenchman and Persian with the gestures of a Persian. Above all, he was proud of his English style. He was recognized as an accomplished draftsman. There was something impressive about his style, but it was so different from the simple, limpid English of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru's style was a bubbling brook; Bajpai's, a man-made reservoir. Nehru's language sprang from the heart; Bajpai's from the head. Bajpai's style confirmed—and Nehru's refuted—Molony's remark that the English of even the best of Indian writers reminded him of a man who played the piano with an instrument instead of with his fingers.

By the time I joined the department of Education, Health and Lands, Bajpai had been there for 15 years. I found the atmosphere there somewhat suffocating. One might say of Bajpai, as Dryden said of Shakespeare, that he laid waste his whole territory simply by occupying it so conclusively. It was therefore with a sense of relief that, after a year in the E. H.

& L., I went as Deputy Secretary to my own department, the Foreign and Political.

The Viceroy was himself Member in charge of the Foreign and Political department and Sir Aubrey Metcalfe was Secretary. I had served under him in Peshawar. There his career had a setback. When the Red Shirts under the leadership of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, staged a demonstration against the Government in Peshawar, Metcalfe went in an armoured car into the city in order to deal with a situation fraught with ugly possibilities. The sight of the car infuriated the crowd. Within a few minutes, it was put out of action and Metcalfe's own life was in danger. A Commission of Enquiry held that it was a serious error of judgement on Metcalfe's part to have gone in an armoured car to face an angry crowd in Peshawar city. Thereupon Metcalfe was replaced as Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, by Caroe, who had gained a reputation as a strong man, and was transferred to Delhi as Deputy Secretary. A couple of years later he became Foreign Secretary.

Metcalfe filled the Foreign Secretaryship with a certain Victorian dignity and grace. He did not have that fabulous reputation for ability which Bajpai had acquired. But he ran his department smoothly and kept his team together. In E. H. & L., whatever was done seemed to redound to the greater glory of Bajpai. But in the Foreign and Political department, each officer got credit for what he did well and was ticked off for what he did badly. Younger officers developed a far greater sense of responsibility and self-confidence under Metcalfe than under Bajpai.

I was the first Indian to be appointed to the F. & P. department. My British colleagues did all that they could to make me feel at home. Yet I somehow felt lonely; sometimes I had a feeling that I did not quite belong there. I was not fired by that vaulting ambition which possessed Bajpai and which spurred him on to outwit and outshine all other officers, Indian and British alike. Nor, I must confess, did I have that highly developed civil service consciousness which N. R. Pillai had. N.R. was imbued with the British tradition that it

was the duty of a civil servant to serve the government of the day regardless of its political complexion. I knew this principle, but sometimes I was vexed by the thought that it was one thing for an Englishman to serve a government, Liberal, Labour or Conservative; another for an Indian to serve an alien government.

A civil servant was not expected to dabble in politics. This injunction I could readily follow, but it was difficult for me to observe the convention that no Indian civil servant should have any contacts, even on a social level, with politicians dubbed anti-British simply because they had the temerity to demand freedom from British rule. One day, N.R., Statham, the Educational Commissioner to the Government of India and I were walking up the Mall in Simla. From the opposite direction came Dr Khan Saheb, the most prominent Congressman of the North-West Frontier Province. When I first met him in Peshawar, he had taken no interest in politics, unlike his fiery brother, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Red Shirt movement. Dr Khan Saheb had married an Englishwoman, wore English clothes and lived in English style in Peshawar cantonment, mixing freely with Europeans, including Sir Ralph Griffith, the Chief Commissioner, and entertaining and being entertained by them. Later, he threw himself heart and soul into the freedom movement and took to wearing khaddar. When he met me on the Mall, he embraced me fervently in the Pathan style, to the astonishment of N.R. and Statham. 'So, these are your friends,' said Statham sarcastically. This remark came strangely from him, for he was noted as a liberal Englishman and had even acquired some of the habits of the people amongst whom he lived in Madras, so much so that he was nicknamed Statham Iyengar.

On another day, Dr Khan Saheb came to dinner with us. Our guests included Mrs Sarojini Naidu and Mr and Mrs Asaf Ali, all famous nationalists and jailbirds. N.R. and his wife were also present. N.R. must have known that a report about this dinner, given by an ICS man to prominent 'anti-British' Congressmen, would reach the authorities. The next day N.R. told me in the gentlest possible way that he believed that each of us had a niche in life and that it was best to stick

to it. Then I realized that N.R. was not only a perfect civil servant but a perfect philosopher. No one has ever accused N.R. of being a careerist. With almost Christian resignation, he did his duty in that station of life to which Providence had called him, and he did it so well both before and after India attained independence that the British knighted him in 1945 and the Government of India conferred on him the title of Padma Vibhushan in 1960. Among civil servants, N.R. was always 'a verray parfit gentil knight'.

A frequent visitor to our home at this time was Liaquat Ali Khan, who was destined to become the first Prime Minister of Pakistan. After our parting at Oxford we had met seldom. Now both of us had acquired wives, and they too struck up a friendship and listened condescendingly to their husbands' reminiscences of their undergraduate days. Liaquat was already a rising star in the Muslim League, but that did not interfere with our friendship. Pakistan was still a dream, and as Jinnah once called it, a schoolboy's dream.

The only man in whose mind the image of Pakistan had reflected itself even before it was conceived was 'Cheiro', the author of the *Book of Numbers*. Two prophecies in that book have always struck my sceptical mind as a phenomenal shadow-casting of coming events. One was that the Prince of Wales would be smitten by love and lose his throne. The other was that, on becoming independent, India would wade through rivers of blood and be partitioned into two. I still remember the incredulous horror with which I read that prophecy thirty years ago.

The mention of Cheiro brings to my mind an amusing episode in our relations with the Liaquats. Once they met in our house a relation of V. P. Menon who claimed to be a palmist and a student of Cheiro's theory of numbers. He convinced the Liaquats that 8 was their unlucky number; they therefore renumbered their palatial house on Hardinge Avenue, which was then being built and which is now occupied by the High Commissioner of Pakistan, by calling it 8B. There is no No. 8 or 8A. The sanest of us have a streak of superstition; and the Liaquats were no exception. Why, the date of Liaquat's assassination, the 16th day of October, was also a multiple of 8!

To anticipate, the last time I met Liaquat was in Government House, New Delhi, in July 1950, when India and Pakistan seemed to be on the verge of war and he and Nehru took counsel together and averted a tragedy. That, alas, was fated to be our last meeting. Liaquat then walked up to me across the banqueting hall of Government House and introduced me to Nehru with the words, 'K.P.S. was at Oxford with me.' 'Or,' he added banteringly but graciously, 'I should rather say I was with K.P.S.' And then he went on to say how I got a First, won a scholarship, was all but elected Fellow of All Souls, etc. Those achievements of mine have already been forgotten, but Liaquat's achievement in building up a State and fostering it in its first critical years will remain in man's memory to the end of time.

The Foreign and Political department was divided into two sides. The Foreign side dealt with external affairs and the Political with Indian States. I was appointed to the Foreign side. It was divided into three Sections—F, N and X. 'F' dealt with the North-West Frontier, Afghanistan and Nepal; 'N' with the Near East; and 'X' with the rest of the world. I was primarily in charge of 'X'. While dealing with the whole world, except our Frontier and the Near East, I realized how little the Government of India under British rule was concerned with the world. It took no interest in south-east Asia except when there was some question connected with the treatment of Indian immigrants—and that was the concern of E. H. & L. It did not take much interest in the Middle East, except in those Arab sheikhdoms which were British Protectorates. It interested itself in the Persian Gulf rather than in Persia. As for the USA, its main concern was that American opinion should not be misled by Congress agitators into thinking that India was ripe for independence. The Soviet Union was a closed book to us. Russia and China were seething with events but the Government of India did not bother about them. China, it was thought, had been a happy hunting-ground for war-lords from time immemorial and would continue to remain so for ever. The Indian Government's interest in Russia was even less than that of Baldwin, who, when Prime Minister,

sent a note to the Foreign Office, saying: 'People are always asking me what is happening in Russia. Please let me have a note. Not more than half a page.'

The size of the department of external affairs in 1935 and in 1963 reflects the difference in the size of its responsibilities then and now. Now the department consists of a Minister, a Minister of State, a Deputy Minister, Secretary-General, Foreign Secretary, Commonwealth Secretary, Special Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary, 7 Joint Secretaries, 9 Directors, 3 Officers on special duty, 21 Deputy Secretaries, 34 Under-Secretaries and 20 Attaches. In 1935 it consisted of a single Secretary and two Deputy Secretaries, namely, Olaf Caroe and myself. Caroe had had a most successful career on the Frontier; he suffered no such setback as Metcalfe did in 1930. Indeed, the very crisis which tarnished Metcalfe's reputation enhanced Caroe's, for after Metcalfe's indecisive handling of the rising of the Red Shirts in Peshawar, it was Caroe who stepped in and restored law and order in the Peshawar district. But he was not a mere district officer; his efficiency as a secretariat man equalled his reputation for executive ability. His distinguishing feature was that he would take nothing for granted, not even the Himalayas. Throughout history, the Himalayas have lulled us into a false sense of security, and once in every few centuries they have let us down. The British rulers were more vigilant, but even they, in their concentration on the problems of the north-west frontier, were inclined to neglect the north-east.

In 1911 there took place a tripartite conference between Great Britain, China and Tibet when the frontier between India, China and Tibet was defined, and the famous McMahon line came into existence. The Chinese, however, refused to ratify this agreement. Thereafter, for over 30 years, the Government of India simply took the McMahon line for granted; they could afford to do so because China, torn by civil wars, was in no position to assert herself, and Tibet, under a strong Dalai Lama, was firmly addicted to its independence. Caroe, however, with a prescience which, in the light of the events of the sixties, must be regarded as remarkable, realized that the

north-east frontier might one day become as live as the north-west, and pressed for the extension of the rudiments of administration, civil and military, into the areas abutting the McMahon line. But for his foresight independent India might have found herself in an even more difficult position to resist the Chinese menace.

I too now began to take a keen interest in our north-east frontier. Our relations with Tibet were conducted through a Political Officer in Sikkim, who used to pay frequent visits to Lhasa. It was an interesting post, which had been held for over twenty years by a famous frontier officer, Sir Charles Bell. He was a close friend of the Dalai Lama, and his presence in Sikkim was worth a whole division of the Indian army, for as long as Charles Bell was there, it was unnecessary to keep any troops on the north-east frontier. I would have liked to be Political Officer in Sikkim, but this was a forlorn ambition.

One of the most distressing features of a dependent people is that they carry, in the eyes of even their smaller neighbours, the badge of inferiority, however much the rulers themselves may try to remove or conceal it. Afghanistan, for instance, refused to have an Indian even as a junior secretary in the British legation in Kabul, though the legation was maintained out of Indian revenues and manned by our Foreign and Political department. At one time it was proposed to post Iskander Ali Mirza, an officer who subsequently rose to be the Governor-General of Pakistan, as Second Secretary. To this the Afghan Government objected and the British Foreign Office supported its objections.

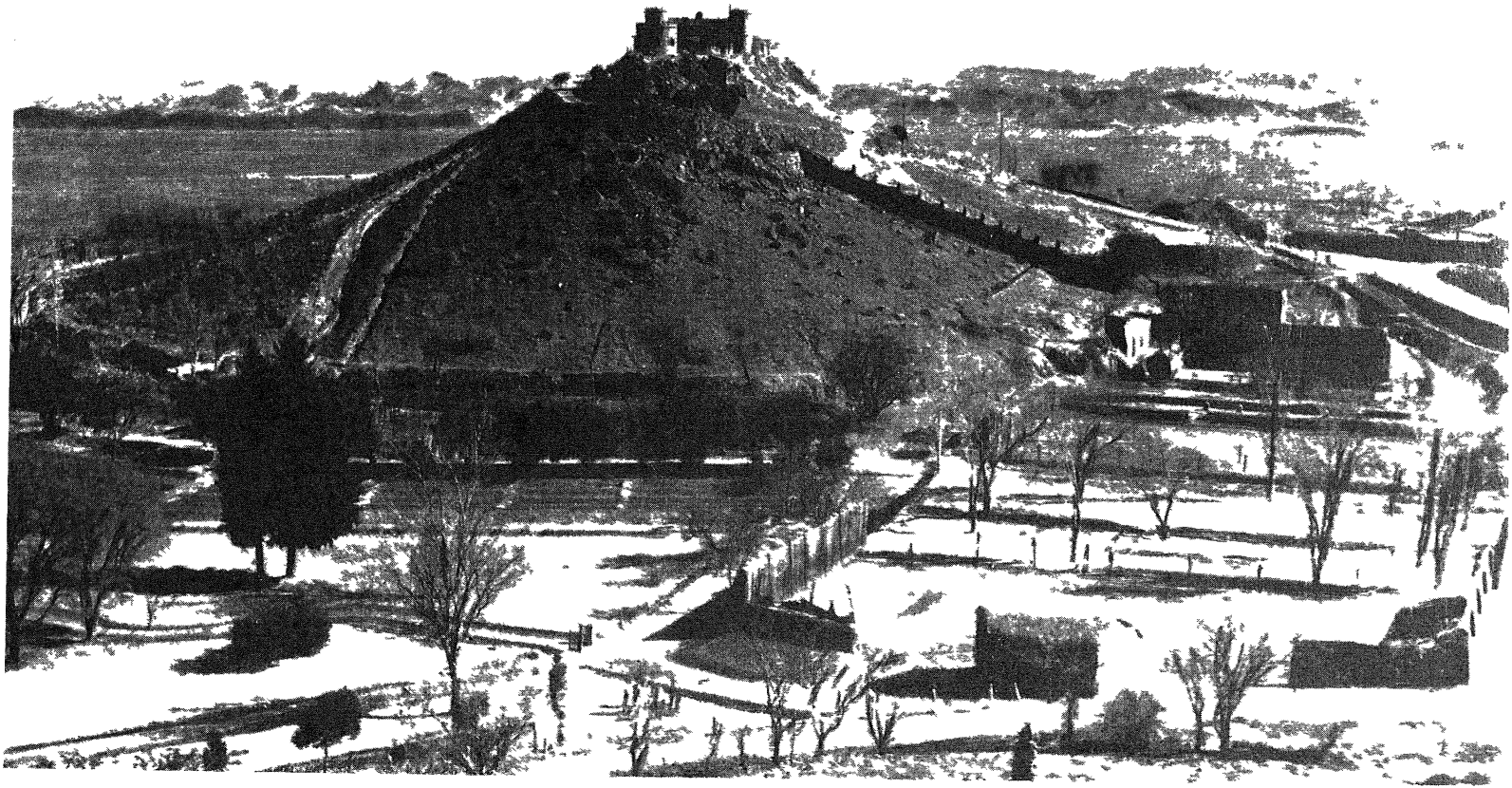
The Political Officer in Sikkim was also in charge of our relations with Bhutan. The Maharaja of Bhutan had agreed to abide by the advice of the Government of India in the sphere of external relations. He was, however, concerned about the increasing Indianization of the services in India; and he professed a preference for British political officers. So my hopes of being Political Officer in Sikkim and visiting Tibet in that capacity were not destined to be fulfilled. I am glad, however, that after India attained independence my daughter, Malini, had the privilege of spending two years in Lhasa as the wife of our Consul-General in Tibet, P. N. Menon.

Another outlying region which gripped my interest was Sinkiang or Chinese Turkistan. Our consulate in Kashgar was the remotest post of the Indian empire. Here too there had been an officer as permanent as Charles Bell in Tibet, namely Philip Macartney, who went to Kashgar as Sir Francis Younghusband's personal assistant in 1894 and stayed on for thirty years. One of his successors, C. P. Skrine, had just published a book on Sinkiang, called *A Central Asian Arcady*. He described how, to reach Kashgar, one had to travel for fifty days on foot or on horseback across the wildest mountain trail in the world. My imagination was fired by the records of these journeys undertaken by colleagues who were fortunate enough to be posted to Kashgar. That was the genesis of my overland journey of 125 days from India to China in 1944, which I have described in my book, *Delhi-Chungking*.

The Government of India's policy in Sinkiang was seemingly inconsistent with their policy towards Tibet. In Tibet they did all they could to repudiate Chinese sovereignty; in Sinkiang, they did all they could to affirm it. The reason was to prevent Sinkiang from falling a prey to what then seemed a greater menace, Russia. In the middle thirties, the Chinese hold over Sinkiang was extremely tenuous. The Tungans had risen in revolt against the provincial Government of Sinkiang. The Government of Sinkiang appealed in vain to the Chinese Central Government for support and then turned to Russia. Russia was only too happy to intervene and quelled the revolt, and Sinkiang passed, to all intents and purposes, under Russian hegemony. Then the Indian Consulate in Kashgar did everything in its power to support Chinese sovereignty in Sinkiang.

The Government's support of Chinese sovereignty in Sinkiang and their repudiation of Chinese sovereignty in Tibet sprang from the same basic interest, namely, to prevent the approach of any other strong power towards India. Throughout the nineteenth century, British foreign policy in Asia was dominated by the 'Russian bogey'; it was thought that the irresistible march of Russia towards the East would only end with the conquest of India. That was why Great Britain fought three wars with Afghanistan, in the hope of keeping it

as a buffer State under British influence between India and Russia. That, again, was why the Government of India supported China's sovereignty over Sinkiang, which in those days was shadowy, rather than Russia's authority in Sinkiang, which was bound to be formidable. As for Tibet, the Government of India strove hard to keep China as well as Russia out of it and to support its independence, subject to a vague form of Chinese sovereignty. In other words, India's relations with Sinkiang and Tibet in British days were based on a mistrust of her neighbours, China and Russia, and a recognition of the play of power politics. Independent India began by following a different policy. Somewhat naively she sought to establish fraternal relations with China, despite its rigid ideology and incurable irredentism, on the basis of the *Panch Sheel* or Five Principles. These were first proclaimed by India and China in their joint statement about Tibet in 1954, but China's subsequent conduct towards Tibet and her aggression on the Indian frontier showed that it was one thing to proclaim principles, another to follow them.



The Castle, Fort Sandeman, as it was in 1938

11

BALUCHISTAN

IN THE MIDDLE of 1937 the Government of India decided to transfer me to Baluchistan and to post me at Fort Sandeman as Political Agent, Zhob. Zhob was a somewhat turbulent district, sandwiched between Afghanistan and Waziristan. I told Bajpai about my impending transfer and was astonished at his reaction. If I were to stay on in his department, he said, I would soon be Joint Secretary and eventually Secretary to the Government of India. The Frontier, he said, was a wild region where anything might happen, and there was no reason why I should be so keen on cementing the British Empire in India with my blood. A strange remark from one who, more than any other Indian, had cemented the British Empire in India with his pen and had in the process won a CBE, CIE, KBE, KCIE and KCSI.

When I said goodbye to Metcalfe, he asked me how I liked the idea of serving in Baluchistan. Very much, I said. 'Do you think you will be able to put it across to the Pathans?' asked Metcalfe. I said I would try. 'Then we shall meet next in Windsor Castle,' said Metcalfe.

The Castle or, as it was sometimes called, Windsor Castle, was to be our home for the next two years. It was situated on the highest hillock in Fort Sandeman. With its towers and turrets, it was an imposing structure, though its roof was the despair of the Military Engineers. Often at a party a chunk of mud would fall from the roof to the amusement of our male guests and the annoyance of the females. In the time of my successor, the Castle was rebuilt as a bungalow. It is now more comfortable to live in but has lost something of its symbolic strength.

The view from the Castle was magnificent. Down the hill was a winding path which took us to the Club and the tennis courts. Around it were the Political Agent's gardens, where we grew apples, peaches and strawberries. Beyond them were

the Officers' Mess and the Army bungalows. In between was the straggling city in which lived the two richest men of Fort Sandeman, two Hindu shopkeepers who catered to the needs of the regiments, namely, Dandoomal and Dayal Das, who were always at loggerheads with each other. In the distance the bare hills stood like sentinels against turbulent Waziristan and Afghanistan.

On another hillock in Fort Sandeman stood the house of the Commandant of the Zhob Militia. The Zhob Militia was an irregular force, manned by specially recruited and carefully trained tribesmen and led by British officers. This force was at the disposal of the Political Agent in maintaining law and order in the Agency. The Commandant of the Zhob Militia was Major Scotland, a bluff, hearty, big-built individual, who was ready at a moment's notice to go out and chase raiders. Once, about midnight, when he was fast asleep, a couple of tribesmen came from Murgha Kibzai, some 30 miles away, saying that Pale, a notorious outlaw and the terror of the countryside, had appeared there. Jock Scotland lost no time in riding off to Murgha Kibzai with a couple of platoons, only to find that it was a false alarm; some cattle, suffering from a peculiar disease, had been found running and someone had started a rumour that Pale had come! Jock and his men returned at dawn, not the least abashed for chasing a phantom instead of Pale.

Pale gave me more trouble than anyone else during my stay in the Zhob. He had quarrelled with the tribal elders and gone off in a huff into the hills between the Zhob and Afghanistan. Every now and then he would descend into the Zhob and commit an outrage, in order to attract the attention of the Government and compel them to bring pressure on the Maliks to redress his complaint. The Government mail lorry plying between Loralai and Fort Sandeman was his favourite target of attack, for it was a visible symbol of Government's authority in this remote region. One day, when I was away on tour, Pale appeared near Kapip with two other companions, held up the mail lorry and shot down eight of its occupants. On my return to Fort Sandeman, I appointed a *Jirga*, or Council of Elders, to go into this case and in accordance with

their recommendation enforced collective responsibility by imposing a heavy fine on the village of Kapip which had failed to discharge its duty of preventing crime and detecting criminals. A few months later, Pale repeated his exploit. Then again I was on tour; and Chauncy, my Assistant Political Agent, on whom fell the brunt of the preliminary investigation, told me that he was beginning to suspect that I was Pale! I lost sight of Pale after I left Baluchistan, but I heard that he came back to the Zhob under the protection of the leading Sardar there, the Nawab of Jogizai, who stood security for his good behaviour.

On a hillock adjoining ours lived Chauncy and his wife, Barbara. They were a delightful couple. Their little four-year-old son, Philip, was most happy to see our children. 'Six childrens have come!' he told his mother excitedly. No wonder he was excited, for until then he was the only child in Fort Sandeman, which was a non-family station, except for the Political Agent and his Assistant. A year after our arrival in Fort Sandeman, Chauncy was, much to our regret, transferred to the Persian Gulf.

Fort Sandeman was essentially a cantonment and the whole atmosphere was military. The civilian officers consisted of myself, the Assistant Political Agent and a Civil Surgeon. There were about fifty Army officers belonging to three regiments—the Rajputs, the Baluchis and the Gurkhas—a detachment of the RIASC and an Air Force squadron. Among these the only regiment which had Indian officers was the Rajputs. Since the Army officers could not have their wives with them, the brunt of the entertainment in the station fell on Anujee. Our relations with the Army were most cordial.

The situation, however, was one in which friction might easily develop between the Political Agent and the Army. The Political Agent had precedence not only over the Officer Commanding the station but even over the Area Commander who lived in Loralai and paid occasional visits to Fort Sandeman. In my time the Area Commander was Brigadier Ross, one of the fattest men I have ever come across. It used to be said of him that when he swam in the Loralai river

his belly touched the bottom and when he tried to stand he found himself out of his depth! He was a good shot and a good soldier and was rather inclined to stand on his dignity. There was always friction between him and my predecessor, and I was anxious to avoid it. We began by being on the most friendly terms. One day, however, I received a telegram from him saying: AREA COMMANDER ARRIVES FORT SANDEMAN TOMORROW. WISHES TO SEE YOU IN INSPECTION BUNGALOW AT ELEVEN. This sounded like an order and I resented it. I immediately sent a reply: POLITICAL AGENT WILL BE GLAD TO SEE AREA COMMANDER IN WINDSOR CASTLE AT 11-30. Brigadier Ross regarded this as an affront, broke off all relations with us and refused to permit the Army horses to take part in the races which were to be held in the succeeding week. During this crisis, I was pleased to find that the sympathy of all the military officers in Fort Sandeman was on my side. I reported this incident to Sir Arthur Parsons, the Agent-General in Baluchistan, and his reply was: 'Well done! This is how I used to treat the Finance Department in Delhi!'

Sir Arthur Parsons was one of the ablest officers I had met in my service. I knew him first in Delhi when he officiated as Foreign Secretary. He came into the Secretariat like a breath of fresh air into an overheated room. And the air which he brought with him was the crisp, clean, bracing air of the Frontier. 'Bunch' Parsons, as he was known among his friends, was a wiry, well-preserved man in his early fifties. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh about him. There was nothing flabby about his mind either, which was keen as a razor. It could cut through all obstacles to the heart of a problem in no time. As soon as Bunch came to the Secretariat, files which had been pending for months, and even for years, began to move quickly. Even the officers of the Finance Department had a proper respect for him. They knew that he knew his mind; they also knew that he could speak his mind with devastating effect. Bunch did not have the slightest symptom of that chronic disease of Secretariat men, logorrhea. He never spoke or wrote one word more than was necessary, but the words he used never failed to hit the target. Well might one say of him, as Benedick said of Beatrice, that he spoke poniards:

every word stabbed. His way of living was simple and almost austere. There was no trace of affectation or ostentation about him. His predecessor, Metcalfe, was an aristocrat. Always carefully dressed himself, we never dared to appear before him in grey flannels and a tweed coat. Bunch wore nothing else, and when he became Foreign Secretary we followed his example. If on any day he saw us in a decent suit, he would say, 'Ah, lunching out again!' In Baluchistan, we discarded even our grey flannels and tweed coat and always went about, as Bunch did, in *mazri* shorts and a bush-shirt.

Bunch had no use for the idle social life of Delhi and Simla. He only entertained those whom he genuinely liked. To them he was a perfect host, revealing the hidden depths of his sweetness. He was a bachelor. It is said that during his time in the Army he loved a girl who declined to respond to the advances of a mere lieutenant, and all his life he remained true to her memory. But he made up for the lack of a family by having numerous god-children, all of whom benefited by his generosity.

The appointment of an Indian as Political Agent created certain problems for the British community in Fort Sandeman. They had a club, and the Political Agent was normally the President. On my appointment as Political Agent the question arose whether an Indian was to be not only admitted to the club, but invited to be the President. The British officers decided to take the risk and were glad to see that I did not keep my wife in purdah or scorn a drink. Anujee, however, continued to be a teetotaller, and whenever she appeared in the club, our friends would shout, 'Waiter, a strong glass of water for Mrs Menon!'

The local inhabitants of the Zhob, too, were at first perturbed at the appointment of an Indian as Political Agent: not only an Indian, but a Hindu and a down-country Hindu, as Madrassis used to be called. The Maliks of the Zhob were in a disgruntled mood over some of the reforms which Parsons had been endeavouring to carry out; they thought that the appointment of an Indian to rule over them was another of his tricks to destroy their prestige. They went on a deputation to my predecessor and expressed their misgivings over my

rumoured appointment. De la Fargue told them that I was not new to the Frontier and had not done badly in Peshawar. In any case, he advised the Maliks to wait and see. They were relieved to find that I did not wear a loin-cloth or put a caste mark on my forehead, and that I could speak their language, Pushtu, as fluently as any British sahib.

Fort Sandeman bore a famous name. It used to be, and was still called by the local people, Apozai. But the Government had renamed it after Colonel Sandeman, one of the ablest administrators the Frontier had thrown up. He devised and perfected the so-called indirect system of administration in Baluchistan. Under this system, the actual administration was left to the Maliks. It was their duty to maintain law and order and to enforce respect for the authority of the Government. The Government's direct authority was restricted to the cantonments and the lines of communication which the Maliks were expected to protect. No attempt was made to introduce the British Indian system of land revenue or the Indian Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code. Tribal custom was acknowledged as sacrosanct. For instance, when a murder took place, I would appoint a Jirga consisting of three or four respectable individuals in the tribe, and frame a few simple issues for their decision. I would then withdraw, and the Jirga would talk to the complainant and the accused and anyone who knew anything about the crime, and then give their verdict. If the verdict was that the accused was guilty it was open to me to convict him or to acquit him; if the verdict was that the accused was not guilty, I was bound to acquit him. If, however, I thought that he deserved to be convicted, I would appoint a fresh Jirga to go into his case. No capital sentence could be imposed under the Jirga system, only imprisonment up to 14 years and fine. Under the tribal code, the blood money to be paid for murder was fixed—Rs. 600 for the murder of a Shirani, Rs. 1,500 for the murder of a Mandokhel and Rs. 3,000 for the murder of a Kibzai. Blood feuds were rampant; in many cases, I found that the latest murder was the 40th or the 50th in a chain.

Crime arose mostly from three factors which the tribesmen

called *zar*, *zan* and *zamin*, that is, money, woman and land. There was a scarcity of all these commodities in tribal territory. The people were desperately poor; their land was unfertile; and there were fewer women than men. My experience was that I could generally rely on the verdicts given by a Jirga in the cases which arose out of disputes over land or money, but where women were concerned I had to be extremely careful.

Under tribal law, a man was entitled to murder his wife for what was called *siahkari*, 'secret business'. *Siahkari* embraced more than adultery. If a woman so much as smiled significantly at a neighbour, or gave him the glad eye, she could be murdered. I came across a number of cases in which a man murdered his enemy in the heat of the moment and came back to his house and murdered his wife in order to set up the defence that he had murdered them both because of *siahkari* between them; and a Jirga, consisting of he-men, was always disposed to accept this plea and acquit the accused. Even if I felt that the man was guilty, I could not convict him except on a finding of guilty by the Jirga. If they failed to give this verdict, I would appoint a second Jirga and a third and a fourth, until I got what I considered to be the right verdict.

In one gruesome case of *siahkari* I had no alternative but to accept the verdict of the Jirga, because the evidence produced was so realistic. It was a case of double murder. The story was that in the middle of the night a woman got out of her bed quietly and went out. The husband asked her where she was going. She said, to answer the call of nature. Seeing that she did not return for an unconscionably long time, the husband went out, only to find his wife in a nearby lane in the arms of her lover. Beside himself with anger, he toppled a couple of large stones on them and killed them both. And the Levies produced as evidence a little semen from the dead woman's vagina.

On the whole, the life of the people in tribal territory corresponded to Hobbes' description of life in primitive societies, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. The Government, wedded to a policy of non-interference in their internal affairs, did little to improve matters. However, they took care to put as much money as possible into the pockets of the tribal Maliks. Each

Malik was given a monthly allowance ranging from five rupees to a thousand. Moreover, he was given a sum of money as a present whenever he called on the Political Agent. On every Monday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. I used to hold a durbar, that is, I used to sit in my room with a bag of money, doling it out to the Maliks who came to pay their respects. By talking to them, I was supposed to keep myself informed of the affairs of my Agency.

Before Parsons became Agent-General in Baluchistan the Maliks used to make money in dubious ways. They were expected to maintain a certain number of Levies, paid for by Government, to patrol the roads, forestall raids and arrest raiders. The pay of the Levies used to be paid to the Maliks concerned. Often, the Maliks appropriated these amounts, or the major part of them, and the so-called Levies turned out on the roads only when the Political Agent or some high official was travelling. Parsons put a stop to these irregularities. He insisted that the Levies should live in the Levy Post and that they should patrol the roads every day, and not simply on special occasions, and that the allowance of each Levy-man should be paid to him direct and not through the Malik. This affected the income of the Maliks; it also affected their prestige in the eyes of the young men of the tribe. The Maliks agitated against Parsons' reforms; when I took charge of the Agency, they were almost on the point of non-cooperating with Government. A very ugly situation seemed to be developing.

I strove hard to reduce the monetary hardships caused by the reforms by persuading Parsons to increase the regular allowance of the Maliks. At the same time, I explained to the Maliks the merits of his scheme. I said that in the long run these reforms would work to their own interests. There were already some signs of disaffection in the tribe; and disaffection always throve on legitimate grievances, such as the appropriation of the Levy-men's salaries by the Maliks. Gradually the agitation against the reforms died down; and when I left Fort Sandeman I was happy to receive a letter from Parsons saying that I had left the Zhob a better place than I found it.

In reality, the credit for the success of the reforms goes to

Parsons. He stood fi m as a rock against all agitation; when he initiated a policy which he regarded as right, he would carry it out heedless of the consequences. There was little doubt that his policy was beneficial to the people of Baluchistan. Yet it had a tragic sequel, the murder of my successor. The Levies of the Zhob were led by Jemadars, Daffadars and Havildars. Before the arrival of Parsons in Baluchistan, these coveted posts used to go from father to son. Parsons insisted that Jemadars, Daffadars and Havildars should be appointed on the basis of merit and not simply heredity. Accordingly, one Sher Jan, whose father had been a Jemadar, was demoted to Havildar. He regarded this as a slur on his name and often came to me and complained of the injustice done to him. After consultation with the tribal elders, I recommended to Parsons that Sher Jan be appointed a Daffadar. That was done, but still he hankered after his father's Jemadari, and after I had left the Zhob, he started pestering my successor, Major Barnes. One day he had an interview with Barnes in the office room in the Castle in which I used to work myself. What exactly transpired at this interview, we do not know. But suddenly Sher Jan took out a revolver and shot Barnes dead. Thus Bajpai's dismal prognostication of cementing the British Empire with blood was fulfilled; only it was not my blood, but my successor's, that was shed.

It might easily have been mine. Barnes was the third Political Agent in Fort Sandeman to have been murdered in recent times. Gaisford was set upon by a tribesman when he was shaving and killed. Finnis was waylaid by a Shirani tribesman near Manikhwa and shot dead. Not far from the Castle there was a cemetery in which, as was the custom in military cemeteries, there was always an open grave. I often used to wonder who would be its next inhabitant.

There was a certain risk attached to the life of a Political Officer on the Frontier. One day I was to have gone to Gul Kach, a grim outpost on the Afghan-Baluchi Frontier, but had to postpone my journey for some reason or other. Subsequently, I was informed that on the day on which I was to have gone to Gul Kach a notorious outlaw was lying in wait for me near Sambaza. On another day, when Anujee and I

were sitting on the veranda of the Castle, we saw a strange-looking tribesman coming up the hill on horseback holding a rifle. We wondered what he was up to. Our head peon's brain worked more quickly than ours. In a second, he went up to the man on horseback, got him to dismount, removed his rifle and led him to the police station, where he confessed that his intention was to kill the Political Agent.

Every now and then we also had reports that some disaffected tribesmen were trying to kidnap one of our children and hold him or her to ransom. This would not have been difficult, as our children used to romp about in the neighbourhood of the Castle without any escort. But instead of kidnapping them, they kidnapped two young Hindus from the city of Fort Sandeman and took them off to Khorasan. The Zhob Militia went out hither and thither to look for them, but in vain. Eventually, owing to the resourcefulness of the Extra Assistant Commissioner, Dost Mohammad Ali Shah, they were brought back. I recommended him for a 'Khan Bahadur' and he got it.

Fort Sandeman was the heyday of our life with children. They were now between the ages of 10 and 15. Soon Ammini would get married and her sisters would follow suit and form homes of their own, and the boys would go to school. But now, for the last time in our service, we were all together. It was fascinating for me to watch the children putting on the plumes of personality. Their heredity and environment had been exactly the same, yet they were growing up so differently from one another. There was only a year's difference between Ammini and Kunja. Ammini was serene and placid, though a little troubled by the vague consciousness of adolescence, but Kunja was restless in body and mind and seemed more at home in a world of her imagination. Malati and Malini were twins. Malati had taken after Ammini in her ways and her maternal grandmother in her looks and was growing to be the belle of the family, but Malini was an almost comic throwback to her paternal grandfather who was by no means a beauty, but had a clear brain and a prodigious memory. Kumar and Shankar were again twins. Shankar was sedate, sober and

studious, though in later life he cultivated a certain frivolity and cynicism in order to convince people—and especially Lalitha, his charming wife who had had an even more brilliant college career than himself—that he was no bookworm. Kumar was at once playful and pensive and loved reading books of all kinds, except those prescribed for his examination, for which he had a wholesome contempt and an unwholesome fear. His attitude towards studies was laconically expressed in his diary. One day he wrote, 'Teacher is ill'; and three days later, 'Teacher is well. What a pity!'

Our daily routine was somewhat as follows. At daybreak, I would go into the children's room, stroke their hair and wake them up. Sometimes I would lie with them and pretend to be dreaming and then relate the dream in all its details—gruesome or hilarious. All day long the children were around me, except when I did office work and they did their homework with their charming and vivacious teacher, Florence Swamikannu, who stayed with us and was in every way a member of our household. We played a number of indoor games. At Fort Sandeman the children were past the age of playing the lion and the fox, their favourite game in Ceylon, where Kumar insisted on being the fox so that he might lure the lion to the fateful well. Now our favourite game was the judge, the policeman and the thief. Very often the policeman beat the thief with such gusto that the game ended in tears. We related stories from Aesop's Fables and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Sometimes we competed with each other as to who could invent the most fantastic story. The wildest story was that I, though born a man, developed signs of womanhood, that my stomach bulged, and that I eventually coughed out the baby on the heights of Shinghar, a charming hill-station in Baluchistan where we used to spend a couple of months in the summer, and where the precise spot where the baby dashed its head against a stone on its emergence into the world and died could be seen. Sometimes we had elocution competitions. Once the topic was: 'Who is happier, a bachelor or a married person?' The girls were neutral, but the boys would not, even for fun, take the married side. One day, we saw Kumar crying and asked him what the matter was. He

complained that Shankar had beaten him. Shankar's excuse was that Kumar had abused him by saying that he was married. It was not till after Shankar was 31 that Kumar could truthfully hurl this insult at him!

The afternoon was devoted to sports. We would play hide-and-seek in the Political Agent's gardens, where one day Ammini hid herself so effectively that the rest of us got worried and thought that she might have been kidnapped by that notorious outlaw, Pale. Or Florence and I would play tennis, and the children would pick up the balls. Every day, all of us, except Kunja who dreaded the sight of a horse, would go out riding. The Zhob Militia horses were at our disposal. Malati was a superb rider and seemed more at home on a horse than in society.

After dinner we would sit round the fire in winter, for in Fort Sandeman the temperature dropped below zero. Fortunately there was no television to distract the children's attention and to corrupt them. The evening passed quietly in conversation, music and poetry. The children had begun with 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'; now they were learning by heart that grand poem, 'The Hound of Heaven'. This I still recite from beginning to end in moments of elation or depression, as for instance when I am lying on the seashore or standing on a hill-top.

Thus I spent all my spare time with the children. I did so not for their sake but for my own, for I enjoyed their company. My enjoyment was not marred by any sense of patriarchal authority or even paternal responsibility. I was content to be their friend and playmate and to squeeze out, and suck in, the last ounce of sweetness from those dear little souls.

Anujee stood apart from us and, in a sense, above us. She could not take part in all our amusements. She had a weak knee and could not ride or play tennis or even walk beyond a certain decorous pace. On the other hand she took on herself the entire responsibility for the children's welfare, material and spiritual. The running of the house, with all that it involved, was entirely her business; all she wanted us to do was to keep out of her way. She was also concerned about laying something by for the future, though our salary, sumptuous as it was

The author with his family in 1940 *Standing* Kunja Author Ammini
Sitting Kumar Malini Anujee Malati Shankar

by the standards of the day, was barely sufficient to make both ends meet. Above all, Anujee was in charge of our interests in the other world. Since none of us cared much for prayer, she doubled and redoubled her own hours of prayer and we left it to her to be our intermediary with God. God could not have wished for a better one, for she was so gentle with Him. She did not pester Him with petitions of any kind. She had no need to do so, for she felt that God was always by her side. She knew that God was impersonal, yet she often envisaged Him in the form of her village deity. Quite often, in the crises of her life, she felt that Devi had succoured her and me. Once, and once only, when I was stricken with smallpox and was at death's door, did Devi appear to me in a dream. Sometimes, as when I was crossing the hazardous passes of the Karakorams, I used to pray and chant a *mantra* which Anujee had taught me. Unlike my prayers, which generally had a purpose, Anujee's were entirely disinterested. For her to pray was as natural and as necessary as to breathe. She could no more live without the one than without the other.

Anujee did not derive such pure enjoyment from the children's company as I did. Her affection was mixed with anxiety. Sometimes the noise we made was too much for her. Sometimes she felt herself isolated. Sometimes she even wondered whether my influence on the children was altogether wholesome. Was it, for instance, proper for the girls in their teens to watch me bathing and to talk to me in season and out of season and to hear me talk irreverently of men and things? And why should they talk in English and not in Malayalam, their mother-tongue? And what English they talked! 'I was stand-upping,' said Shankar once, 'and Kudu was sit-downing when one noise came.' The children had also acquired certain Anglo-Indian habits. For instance, they called our bearer Biharilal, who was old enough to be their father, 'boy'. Once we decided that every time anyone called him boy, he should pay a fine of one anna. By the end of the month, Biharilal had amassed a tidy sum and was hoping that the children would not be affected by our efforts to reform them.

On the whole Anujee had an uneasy feeling that the girls were growing up like tomboys and that it would be a job to

find bridegrooms for such rumbustious creatures. Yet as they grew up they began to take more and more after their mother. In fact her influence has proved to be more enduring than mine. The girls have acquired her qualities—her simplicity, her austerity, her hatred of ostentation, her aversion to cosmetics, her habit of prayer, her proprietary instincts and her respect for all man-made conventions, some of which I despise even when I conform. I was but a passing wind which stirred the minds and hearts of the children during their most susceptible years, but Anujee was the constant sun under which they basked unconsciously and from which they drew spiritual sustenance. Yet I was happy to see that when they got older they still remembered the wind which played about them in their childhood. In Moscow, on 21 April 1953, that is, on the thirtieth anniversary of our marriage, I found on my table a poem addressed to me by Kunja:

> You taught me to love the first drops of rain
> Upon the parched earth;
> And all the loveliness of life and birth
> You showed me again and again.
>
> You taught me to wonder at the flutter of wings
> And the rapture of sun-drenched trees,
> At the ocean's anger, and the vagaries
> Of men and things.
>
> All the loveliness of life—and even
> The glory of death:
> You taught me to love from my childhood breath
> All earth, all heaven.

Our two years in Fort Sandeman were finished all too quickly. There are few places we were so sorry to leave. Despite the hazards of our life, we enjoyed our time there. We liked the bracing climate, the bare hills and the limitless distances. We liked Shinghar, the quaintest of hill stations, which had only three bungalows and where we used to spend a month or two in the summer. We liked the Club, where I used to have a strong glass of whisky and Anujee a strong glass of water. We liked the evenings in the Officers' Mess, to

which we were often invited as honoured guests. We liked our visits to the Pathan villages where the Maliks treated us to the most delicious kababs we had ever eaten and the richest tea we had ever tasted, for the more honoured the guest, the more milk and sugar they would add to it and the longer they would brew it. We liked the long walks in the countryside, the longest of which was through the deep Dhanasar gorge to Moghulkot, which was littered with the skeletons of the camels which had slipped and fallen during the winter migration of the Suleiman Khel from Afghanistan to the warmer climate of north India. Above all we enjoyed our rides in and around Fort Sandeman, with the villagers, who kept their own women in purdah, gaping at our teen-aged daughters and wondering what creatures they were, who seemed Indian and wore Indian clothes and yet rode about unveiled like brazen memsahibs.

We were to have left Fort Sandeman in October 1939. On the eve of my departure I held a durbar. I put on my uniform, with helmet, sword and the King George V Jubilee medal all complete, made a speech in Pushtu and gave sanads and rewards to the deserving Maliks and admonition to the others. We then gave a farewell party, at which all the British officers of the station were also present. That evening, my son Shankar was taken ill with typhoid, and Metcalfe, who had now become the Chief Commissioner in place of Parsons, agreed to my staying on until the boy was well, even though St John, who was to have been my successor, had already arrived in Fort Sandeman.

Shankar's typhoid took the normal course, and it was not till the middle of November, 1939, that we left Fort Sandeman. We had a most affectionate send-off. I think the British officers were sorry to see us leave; they had backed me up even against their own Area Commander when I had a quarrel with him. The Sardars and Maliks were equally sorry. Headed by the Jogizai Nawab and his cousin and inveterate rival, Zarghun Khan, they escorted us to the border of the Zhob Agency, embraced us in the Pathan style and bade goodbye to us with tears in their eyes. I little dreamt then that a time would come when, if I wanted to go to Fort Sandeman, I would have to apply for a visa from a foreign government.

12

BHARATPUR

IN NOVEMBER 1939 I took 8 months' leave and was to have left for England on the *Circassia* with my wife and daughters, when the war broke out and all our arrangements had to be cancelled. I then contented myself by taking four months' leave and spent it with my mother in Travancore. That was the last holiday I was destined to spend with her.

On the expiry of my leave, I was posted as Dewan, or Chief Minister, Bharatpur, an Indian State in Rajputana. After Baluchistan, Bharatpur was an anticlimax. It was like living in a pleasant but stagnant oasis after having crossed a moving glacier. Life on the Frontier was high adventure; service in Bharatpur was humdrum. After Baluchistan, both man and nature in Bharatpur were civilized and insipid. A few days after I took over as Dewan, a very distant relation of the Maharaja came to see me, related his tale of woe and started weeping. I found it difficult to sympathize with him; no Pathan would have behaved like him. He was not even pathetic; he was just ridiculous—a grown-up man shedding tears of self-pity over his petty troubles!

Nature in Bharatpur was equally placid. There were no rolling hills, no deep ravines, no narrow gorges in which outlaws would be lying in wait. In Bharatpur the winter was cold by Indian standards, but it never touched freezing-point, as it often did in Fort Sandeman; nor was there ever snow. In summer, there were no violent winds such as those which used to blow in Fort Sandeman and shake the very walls of the Castle. The only occasion when Nature showed that it had a temper was when it sent a series of suffocating dust-storms in the summer. Once, on our way from Bharatpur to Deeg, the Maharaja's summer residence, we were caught in one of those dust-storms. It was like a London fog in November—we could hardly see six feet ahead of us. The result was that it took us two hours to complete a journey which normally took forty-five minutes.

We arrived in Bharatpur on 1 April 1940. Sir Richard Tottenham, my predecessor, had wired to say that he would receive me at the railway station, together with the Home Member, the Education Member and the Judicial Member. In order to avoid this ceremony, I cancelled my seat on the train at the last minute and drove unobtrusively in my car into Bharatpur.

Tottenham was one of those ICS officers who were called to the Central Secretariat fairly early in their service. He had been Deputy Secretary and later Secretary in the Defence department and had been awarded a knighthood. Thereafter he spent two years in Bharatpur, and much to his chagrin was reverted to his province, Madras, and posted, of all places, to Salem, a district where prohibition was in force. Tottenham thereupon took leave and went to Simla, and before long found himself Additional Secretary in the Home department. Richard Tottenham was an able secretariat officer, but temperamentally different from his famous uncle, Loftus Tottenham, a born district officer, who, after having risen high in the service of the Government of India, retired and settled down as Dewan in a small South Indian State, Pudukottai, and was content to lay his bachelor bones there.

On the day after my arrival in Bharatpur, Richard Tottenham took me to the Maharaja who was then in residence in Deeg. Herbert Thompson, the Political Agent and an old friend, was also present. The Maharaja shook hands with me politely and took no further notice of me; he seemed to enjoy talking to Tottenham. Nevertheless, my first impression of him was good. He seemed frank, jovial, quick-witted and good-humoured. He had been educated in England, and this had given him a knack, which few Indians possess, for small talk. Instinctively, I felt that he did not like my appointment as his Dewan, and Thompson later confirmed that that was so. The Maharaja would have liked Tottenham to stay on rather than have an Indian to keep a watch on him. Moreover, I was in the Political department and Tottenham was not; and some Indian princes regarded a Political officer as a natural enemy. However, it did not

take long for the Maharaja to relent. A month after I took over in Bharatpur, Sir Bertrand Glancy, the Political Secretary to the Government, wrote to say that he had heard, and was glad, that the atmosphere in Bharatpur had become less frozen. A year later, Sir Francis Wylie, the Political Adviser to the Viceroy, contrasted the state of my relations with the Maharaja of Bharatpur with the relations of Harvey in the neighbouring State with the Maharaja of Alwar. He said that while the Maharaja of Alwar reacted to Harvey as a bull to a red rag, the Maharaja of Bharatpur would eat out of my hand. Though that was an exaggeration, the Maharaja had come to look upon me as a friend. I won his friendship not by kow-towing to him or flattering him or declining to exercise my special powers as Dewan, but simply by treating him as a normal human being who deserved understanding and sympathy. In dealing with men, whether on the Frontier or in Indian States or in foreign countries, I have always tried to follow Goethe's motto that the only way of making a man good is by making him think that he is already what you wish him to be. Generally speaking, this principle has paid dividends.

Bharatpur was the premier Jat State in India and had illustrious martial traditions. Even Lord Lake, the conqueror of Delhi and Agra, quailed before the fort of Bharatpur and was forced to retreat. Bharatpur was the last State in Rajputana to fall to the British. It had some eminent rulers, from Maharaja Suraj Mal in the seventeenth century to Maharaja Jaswant Singh in the nineteenth. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, it fell on evil days. Maharaja Ram Singh, the son of Jaswant Singh, proved erratic and was deposed. His son Kishen Singh was then a minor, and until he attained majority Bharatpur was administered by officers appointed by the Viceroy. Kishen Singh was a man of consummate charm, but he was most extravagant and landed the State heavily in debt. He was therefore compelled to resign his powers and reside outside the State. On his premature death, there was again a long minority administration as his son was a minor. In 1938 the present Maharaja was invested with ruling powers but, lest history should repeat

itself, his powers were strictly circumscribed. He was compelled to give an undertaking that he would accept a Dewan appointed by the Government of India; that he would issue no order except through, and in consultation with, the Dewan; and that if there was any difference of opinion between him and the Dewan, the matter would be referred to the Government of India. Thus the Dewan had co-equal, if not overriding, powers *vis-a-vis* the Maharaja, and His Highness naturally resented it. But he realized that I, at any rate, would not exercise those powers arbitrarily or in a way which would belittle him in the eyes of his people.

The Maharaja was an artist by temperament. He had an eye for beauty. He improved the gardens of Moti Mahal beyond recognition and furnished it with exquisite taste. In Deeg, in the courtyard of his palace, he unearthed fountains which had lain hidden for over a century and of whose existence he learnt only from an old print. He made a charming little hermitage, called Kadam Kunj, in the woods. He also had many other schemes for beautifying Bharatpur. Unfortunately, these needed money and the State was still in debt as a result of his father's extravagance. The Maharaja's own privy purse was fixed and he knew that encroachment on the State revenues was out of the question.

I suppose a quick temper goes with an artistic temperament. On one occasion I told the Maharaja that he really should learn to control his temper. 'Surely, Mr Menon,' he said disarmingly, 'You will admit that I have not lost my temper since June last, and that was three months ago.' On another occasion, the Maharaja and I had an argument as to whether the water from the lake should be diverted first to the Ghana for the duckshoots or to the agricultural lands for irrigation purposes. The Ghana was the finest jheel for duck in India; and the great event of the year was the Viceroy's shoot when anything between 3,000 and 5,000 birds used to be shot in a single day. I myself preferred ringing ducks to shooting them, and one of the ducks I ringed in the company of our ornithologist, Salim Ali, was found as far away as Lake Baikal. The Maharaja was a keen shot and was anxious that there should be sufficient water in the Ghana to attract the ducks. I

insisted that the needs of irrigation should come first. The Maharaja said that he knew the needs of his people better than myself. I retorted that I wished that he would show it in practice. He lost his temper and went off with his staff to his palace on Lake Bareta and sulked there for a few days. A week later, he came back to Bharatpur, his usual charming self, as if nothing had happened. Indeed, he became so fond of me that he started calling me uncle.

I was glad to have a royal nephew; I wanted to have a royal niece too. The Maharaja was a desirable bachelor, and there was no lack of proposals for his hand. One would-be bride was the sister of the Maharaja of Patiala. Unfortunately she was taller than him, and on no account was he prepared to marry a girl who was taller. Another eligible bride was the daughter of the Maharaja of Dholpur. In some ways it would have been a natural alliance, for Dholpur was a Jat State and next door. But the Maharaja of Dholpur was an out-and-out autocrat. He believed in the right divine of kings to govern right, and could never imagine them governing wrong. Between the ruler and his subjects there was a mystic union, sanctified by God. In the Maharaja's view such mundane things as schools and roads and hospitals did not matter; what did matter was the personal touch between the ruler and the people. Even the animals in Dholpur seemed to sense his personal touch. Once he took me out on the lake in Dholpur, and I saw wild sambur from the adjoining forests coming to feed from his hand. All this did not mitigate his character as an autocrat, and I felt that such a father-in-law would not be a wholesome influence on the young Maharaja of Bharatpur.

Fortunately, astrology came to our rescue. The court astrologer compared the horoscopes of the Maharaja of Bharatpur and the princess of Dholpur and gave her only 4 marks out of 10 whereas the minimum for a pass was 6. Colonel Sampat Singh, the Education Minister, and I were deputed to convey this melancholy news to the girl's father. After some preliminary talk, Sampat Singh told the Maharaja in his circumlocutory way that the stars had sent a cloud over the prospects of an alliance between Dholpur and Bharatpur.

At first the Maharaja did not understand what he was driving at. Then suddenly he asked, 'Does this mean that Indu is not going to marry my daughter?' I said that that was what it came to. For a moment the Maharaja lost his usual aplomb; his fingers twitched and his face became pale. But he quickly recovered his composure, dropped the subject of marriage altogether and treated us to a delicious meal. That was the last time I saw the Maharaja of Dholpur.

In the meantime a proposal had been received for the marriage of the Maharaja of Bharatpur with the sister of the Maharaja of Mysore. I welcomed it; Mysore was the most progressive State in India and had an enlightened ruler, and nothing but good would come out of this alliance. It was arranged that the Maharaja should meet the girl and her mother in the house of the Yuvarani of Mysore in Bombay. Anujee and I were present at the fateful interview. The Yuvarani was there with her two daughters, of whom it was hoped the Maharaja would marry the elder one. She looked nervous and frightened. The younger girl was prettier and had a mischievous smile at the impending fate of her sister. After this interview, the Maharaja came to me and said that he preferred the younger girl and wanted to marry her. This raised a problem; the girl was barely 14, and it was not the custom for a girl to marry while her elder sister remained unmarried. However, a Maharaja was a Maharaja and Bharatpur was a historic State and the proposal was clinched.

We accompanied the Maharaja to Mysore for the ceremony. Hardly had I arrived when I received a telegram conveying the news that my mother was seriously ill. I rushed to Kottayam to see her. She was already in a coma and never recovered from it. At 6 p.m. on 11 July 1941 she breathed her last. It was the hour of sunset, and I felt that the sun had set in my life too. The sun had set over Kottayam as well—the town could never be the same without her. Whenever I think of her, I call to mind that lovely metaphor in the Gita, 'a flame in a windless spot that does not flicker'. For 64 out of a life of 78 years she had lived in Kottayam, deeply respected and admired by all. She had had her share of a mortal's troubles. She lost her husband at 55, her eldest son

at 60; and her youngest son's matrimonial vagaries had caused her much sorrow. But she had an inner serenity which seemed to increase with the years and gave her countenance a glow which she retained to the end of her life. She was one of those remarkable women, at once strong and gracious, whom our matrilineal society threw up from time to time.

I had little time to mourn my mother's death. I had to return quickly to Mysore to attend the Maharaja of Bharatpur's wedding, which was celebrated with a splendour worthy of both States. The Maharani looked a child and had a solemn gravity beyond her years. Once Colonel Russell, the Political Agent in Bharatpur, sat next to her at dinner and asked her whether she liked reading. Yes, she said. Who was her favourite author? Shakespeare, replied the Maharani. Russell gave up the conversation in despair as he himself had not gone much beyond Edgar Wallace. On another occasion, the Maharaja and Maharani and my wife and myself were sailing in a motor-boat on Lake Bareta and the Maharaja was showing off his prowess in shooting crocodiles. Suddenly, the Maharani asked me if I had ever heard an elephant trumpet. 'No.' 'It is petrifying,' said the Maharani. It seemed to me as if she had just found the word somewhere and was trying it out on me. She was a tender-hearted girl. Once Anujee accompanied her to the film, *Gone with the Wind*. The Maharani could not bear to see so many deaths in it. Whenever a new character appeared, she would turn to Anujee and ask her tearfully, 'Mrs Menon, will he die too?'

It was not easy for a girl from progressive Mysore to adapt herself to the atmosphere of Bharatpur, which was somewhat medieval. The Maharani did her best to give satisfaction to her husband, who was genuinely fond of her, but failed in one respect. She could not give him a son and heir. Her first child arrived when she was just 15; it was a daughter. So were the second and third children, who arrived in quick succession. There were not wanting courtiers like those who recently successfully advised the Shah of Iran to divorce Queen Suraiya because she had failed to give him an heir. The Maharaja nobly refused to listen to such advice, and the Maharani tried again to give him a son and heir. The fourth

The author's mother with the lamp she presented to the Kottayam temple. This photograph was taken a few days before her death

child arrived, and was again of the wrong sex. She made a final effort, with the same result. Then her young heart broke and stopped beating. She was in her early twenties when she died.

The affairs of the Maharaja's family consumed much of my time. He had two sisters, who would have won prizes in a beauty contest in any part of the world, and three brothers. The relations between the elder sister and the Maharaja were not friendly and for this he was not to blame. All the three brothers had been educated in England. Two of them, Muttoo and Bachoo, returned to Bharatpur when I was there and were given a great reception. Muttoo, a favourite of the elder sister, soon died of fever. Bachoo joined the Air Force and married a grand-daughter of the Maharaja of Kapurthala. We accompanied the bridegroom's party to Kapurthala and were most hospitably entertained by the Maharaja. There was a French atmosphere about his palace. The architecture was in some ways French; so was the cuisine. The chief cook was a Frenchman and received a higher salary than the Chief Medical Officer or the Director of Education.

The Maharaja of Kapurthala was a globe-trotter. He took us to his study and showed us a map of the world on which his journeys to the most distant regions were shown by means of strings, red, blue, green and yellow, and there were so many that it looked like a multicoloured cobweb. It must be said to his credit that it was through him that some countries, such as those in Latin America, came to know of India. When I visited Hungary in 1954, the manager of the Grand Hotel showed me a visitors' book, in which the Maharaja of Kapurthala had entered his signature, and he recalled the good old days when His Highness would book the entire second floor for himself, his Maharanis and retinue. The Aga Khan records in his memoirs an anecdote which the Maharaja of Kapurthala told against himself.[1] He was on a visit to Rome when King Umberto of Italy, an abrupt soldierly figure, called unexpectedly. Noticing a number of photographs of beautiful women in the sitting-room, King Umberto barked gruffly, 'Who are these women?'

[1] *The Memoirs of Aga Khan*, p. 302.

'They, Sir, are my wives.'

The King swung round. 'Well, I too have got as many women as you. But there's this difference between us. I don't keep 'em together. I keep 'em in different houses. You keep all yours in your palace.'

Whether King Umberto was correct in his diagnosis or not, by the time we reached Kapurthala the chauffeur used to point out to us the houses built for the Spanish Maharani, the French Maharani, the Georgian Maharani, and several others.

While I was busy finding a suitable bride for the Maharaja of Bharatpur, I also had to find bridegrooms for my daughters. In the case of our eldest girl this was quite easy. From childhood she had been earmarked for Rajan, the son of a very close friend. I remember that one day when I was shaving, Ammini came up and said, 'Daddy, I think Rajan is the handsomest man I have met.' I am afraid her sisters were not at first so ecstatic over their bridegrooms, but they have become equally devoted wives. In their case love began after marriage; in Ammini's before.

A year after her marriage Ammini presented us with our first grandchild, a daughter. Anujee was then barely 40 and I was 44. The little girl was born on 15 August 1942. The 15th of August was a date which was to prove historic in the annals of India and Britain, for it was on that day, five years later, that 'India, that is Bharat' became independent. And as if in anticipation of this event, but in reality after her father's mother who had just passed away, our grand-daughter was named Bharati. When she was born, the omens for India's independence were far from favourable. The Cripps Mission had just failed, and Churchill had declared 'What we have we hold'. In August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi declared his intention to launch a Quit India movement on a massive scale with the motto, *Karenge ya marenge*, 'We shall do or die'. The Government took up the challenge. On the 8th of August, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and all the members of the Working Committee of the Congress were arrested and imprisoned. Instructions were issued for the arrest of the leading members of the Congress in every Province and every

princely State. This applied to Bharatpur, too; and Raj Bahadur, Aditendra, Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi and others were imprisoned. There were a few meetings and demonstrations in Bharatpur against their arrest. I had given express instructions that these meetings and demonstrations should not be interfered with unless they turned violent, and they fizzled out. I was anxious to let out the Congress leaders in Bharatpur as soon as possible, and they were not anxious to stay on unnecessarily in prison. Soon an opportunity presented itself for their release.

It would be tedious to recall the administrative measures taken by me in Bharatpur. In any case, they have now become out of date. Even measures which seemed important at that time have now lost their significance. For instance, I persuaded the Maharaja to establish a High Court in Bharatpur. Until then, the final appellate authority was the Maharaja-in-Council. The Council included a judicial member, a retired District and Sessions Judge from British India, Khan Bahadur Mohammad Halim. He was not only an expert in law but an expert in curing snake-bite. His method was highly original. Whoever brought the news of a snake-bite would receive a good slap from Mohammad Halim, and the poison would go out of the bitten man. Whether the majority of snakes in Bharatpur were of a non-poisonous variety or whether this was a case of faith cure, I do not know. After India attained independence, the High Court of Bharatpur was merged with the High Court of Rajputana.

Another step which was taken by me and which was applauded at that time was the inauguration of a Legislative Assembly, consisting of elected as well as nominated members. The assembly has gone with the wind. So has Bharatpur as a separate entity, for today it is only one of the many districts in Rajasthan. However, the proposal to establish a Legislative Assembly gave me an opportunity for releasing the imprisoned leaders of the Congress on the ground that I wanted to consult public opinion. They were the most prominent among those who organized a public meeting in my honour on the eve of my departure from Bharatpur and said many kind things which I did not deserve. The Maharaja was genuinely sorry when

I left Bharatpur, and the Government of India showed their appreciation of my work by bestowing the CIE on me. Thus I somehow managed to keep on the right side of the Prince, the people and the Government of India, three elements whose interests did not always coincide. To have served not two masters but three, without causing injury to any of them or forfeiting their esteem, was a good training for the diplomatic life which I was now destined to enter.

13

WARTIME CHINA

WHEN my term in Bharatpur was coming to a close, I was summoned to Delhi and offered an unexpected appointment. I was asked whether I would like to be considered for the post of Agent-General for India in China, which Sir Zafrullah Khan had just vacated. Caroe, the Foreign Secretary, warned me that Chungking was a hard station, that it lacked the normal amenities of life and that the climate was execrable. Moreover, Chungking was liable to be bombed heavily throughout the summer. Nevertheless, said Caroe, the appointment of Agent-General in Chungking was one of importance to India: the Agents-General in Chungking and Washington were India's first diplomatic, or semi-diplomatic, posts abroad. After consulting Anujee I said that I was quite willing to go to Chungking but would like to take her and our daughter, Kunja, with me. This was a somewhat strange request, because there were hardly any diplomatic wives in wartime Chungking. Nevertheless the Government of India agreed to my request.

We were to have left for China in the spring of 1943, but there was no suitable accommodation in Chungking and the Government of India would not let me go until the Chinese authorities had found a house for me. In the meantime, they posted me in a short-term vacancy as Political Agent for the Western Rajputana States. This was an innovation. Only ten years earlier, Sir Bertrand Glancy, then Political Secretary, had told me that it was unlikely that Indians would be posted as Residents or Political Agents in the Princely States 'in the foreseeable future'. The reason given was that the Princes themselves would not like it. Many Indian Princes, with a false sense of prestige, certainly preferred Englishmen, rather than their own countrymen, to lord it over them as representatives of the Paramount Power. The Maharaja of Jodhpur was an exception; he welcomed my appointment and was

almost ostentatiously courteous to me. When I went to his hunting-lodge, he came down the steps to receive me instead of receiving me at the top of the stairs; which was all that protocol required.

How correct British officers too were! When I went to Jodhpur State as Political Agent, Sir Donald Field was the Prime Minister. He was considerably senior to me in the Foreign and Political department: when I was a mere Under-Secretary he was already the British Resident in Travancore and Cochin. Nevertheless, he came to the Jodhpur railway station to receive me on my arrival and to see me off on my departure, for he was then simply a servant of the State, whereas I was the representative of the Paramount Power!

My Agency included four other States, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Sirohi and Palankot. Jaisalmer lies in the middle of a desert, and I had to visit it at the height of summer in order to induce the Maharaja to take precautions against an expected invasion of locusts. On the day after my arrival, I received a printed invitation to a banquet in the Maharaja's palace. I put on my dress suit, though the temperature was over 120°F., and the Maharaja was also in ceremonial dress. His Highness sat at one end of a long table and I at the other. There were no other guests; only a multitude of liveried servants. Wines flowed freely, and when champagne came, the Maharaja got up with great dignity, raised his glass and said, 'The King!'.

At last a house was found for us in Chungking and Anujee, Kunja and I left for China on 17 September 1943. The flight from Calcutta to Chungking was a thrilling experience. We left at crack of dawn. Swiftly we rose through and above the clouds. From above, the clouds looked fantastic and assumed the weirdest forms and shapes. Rolling, crawling, whirling clouds; moving, resting, drifting clouds; clouds rising into the heavens like columns of smoke; clouds dangling in the air like flakes of silver; and all lit up by the rays of the morning sun. Through the cracks in this fairy cloudland we obtained glimpses of the Brahmaputra river winding round the corner of the Himalaya mountains into India. Then we began to descend and the trees and even the tea shrubs of Assam rose

to greet us. At about 10 o'clock we landed in a godforsaken spot, Dinjon, in the north-easternmost corner of India.

We refuelled the engines, and ourselves, and set off again in about half an hour. We passed over 'the Triangle', where the borders of India, Burma and China merge. The scenery which now confronted us was very different from that which we had left behind. We saw a wild confusion of mountain and jungle. Behind us, below us and against us were mountain ranges, some of them snow-clad, running parallel to one another and separated by the deep gorges of the Irrawaddy, the Mekong and the Salween rivers. We rose higher and higher until we touched 20,000 feet. Some of our companions were fast asleep while others furtively sniffed at their oxygen cylinder. We ourselves found it difficult to keep awake, for the atmosphere was so rarefied. But keep awake we must, for we were seeing views on which, until the advent of the aeroplane, the gods alone had feasted their eyes. We were now on 'the Hump', on the top of the enormous mountain ranges which separate India from China. We felt like Siva and Parvathi in an Ajanta picture, floating in the heavenly regions. But an irresistible langour crept into our limbs; we could not keep our eyes open any longer; we fell asleep. We were awakened by our hostess, drawing the blinds in order to prevent us from looking out and seeing the military area through which we were passing. Presently we landed in Kunming, we touched mother earth. We realized the full significance of the expression 'mother earth', for having been in the ethereal regions we touched the earth with that sense of security with which a child nestles to its mother.

At about 2 o'clock we left Kunming. The scenery was still mountainous, but somewhat less wild and stupendous. Winding in and out of the hills we saw that magnificent feat of engineering, the Burma Road. It was called China's life-line, for after her seaports had fallen into the hands of Japan, it was her only means of communication with the outer world. After an hour the scenery became slightly more friendly. We saw smiling fields, geometrically laid out and symmetrically terraced. We then passed into a region of impenetrable fogs. For six months these fogs lay over Chungking like a pall and

acted as a screen against air raids. Just before sunset we began to descend and soon found ourselves on a sandbank in the Yangtze river. Our journey was over, we were in Chungking.

This was one of the most hazardous air routes in the world, and but for the stern necessities of the war it would never have been considered. When China's sea coast was occupied by the Japanese it became a matter of importance to keep up the dispatch of supplies to China. This was at first done partly over the Burma Road and partly by air. When the Burma Road was overrun by the Japanese, supplies had to be rushed in exclusively by air. At first the air route lay over Burma, and the CNAC (Chinese National Airways Corporation) pilots, mostly American, hurdled the Hump at a height of about 10,000 feet. But after the Japanese capture of Myitkyina the pilots had to fly over a route further west, at a height of 20,000 feet.

The CNAC was not merely, or even primarily, a passenger service. Through the air flew into China petrol, medical supplies, two-and-a-half-ton lorries and 4,000-lb anti-aircraft guns. Such a service could not be operated without loss of life. The pilots had to meet the combined assaults of man and Nature. The planes were liable to get into dangerous air-pockets, ice was liable to settle on their wings, and they were liable to be shot down by the Japanese. Yet American and Chinese pilots cheerfully laid down their lives so that China might live. Precautions were taken to reduce casualties to the minimum. Fighter patrols had been organized and a system of rescue aircraft had been introduced. Every pilot was supplied with a parachute, a mosquito net, iron rations and a knife with which to hack his way through the jungle. It took one stranded pilot 45 days to find his way out of the hills. When another pilot baled out he weighed 185 pounds; when he reached civilization, he weighed 80. Yet in spite of these dangers and hardships the service bravely carried on. It was called the 'China ferry service'.

Chungking was the most fantastic, as well as the most fascinating, station in which I had served so far. When I knew that I was going to China I expected to see the things

associated with Chinese architecture—pagodas, curved roofs, glazed tiles and buildings all aglow with colour. We saw none of these in Chungking. After all, Chungking was only a temporary improvized capital. It was a dark-grey city, much bombed and much battered. Dark-grey was the prevailing colour. The tiles were grey; the bricks were grey; the walls were painted grey or black as an air-raid precaution; and the standardized dresses of both men and women were deep blue. Above all, the skies were grey; and for seven months we did not see the sun. Sir Frederic Eggleston, the charming and scholarly Australian Minister in China, suffering from arthritis, had a habit of recording to the second the number of minutes for which the sun shone every week. He calculated that the total score for four and a half months was only three and a half hours. Indeed, so rare was the appearance of the sun that there was a proverb, 'In Szechuan dogs bark at the sun'.

When we reached Chungking, it was the second half of September. Everyone in the town was sweltering in a moist heat. Men went about with wet towels on their heads and women carried dainty fans. On our arrival, we felt as if we had descended into an enormous Turkish bath, but one morning we found ourselves in the grip of winter. Impenetrable fogs enveloped us without notice. Blasts from the frozen tableland of Siberia began to disturb the heated air of the Yangtze valley, which then rose and became a ceiling of fog for the next seven months. During the winter there was also a thin, grinding drizzle, which turned the streets into rivers of mud. Occasionally we had snow too. But the snow had none of the purity and whiteness which one usually associates with it, for it turned quickly into slush.

In the middle of April the appearance of the place changed completely. Trees put forth leaves, plants put forth blossoms and birds began to sing. But along with bird-song came an eerie sound, the air-raid alarms. During the winter, thanks to the fog, Chungking was entirely invisible to the enemy from the air, but from April onwards it was a tempting target. The town had an excellent system of air-raid warning, with alarm-posts on all the principal streets. As soon as an enemy plane crossed the provincial boundary, two balls went up,

which meant that there was still about an hour left for the people to take shelter. Chungking was liberally provided with dugouts. There were enough for 600,000 people, built in the living rock and continually enlarged. In 1943 we had a few alarms but no raids—the Japanese planes were busy elsewhere. In 1941 and 1942, however, Chungking had been bombed day and night; sometimes there were non-stop raids which kept the people in the dugouts for days together and dislocated all business. Most of the solid buildings in Chungking were blitzed into nothingness. New buildings were always cropping up, but as they were built of bamboo and mud the capital looked like a collection of impoverished shacks.

Chungking had few of the amenities of life. The streets were insanitary and the smells overpowering, because of the careful accumulation of human faeces for manure. Zafrullah Khan had advised me to undergo an operation to remove my sense of smell before I left India! There were few recreations, and in the evening reading was difficult because the electric current was weak. On one day of the week electricity was cut off altogether, and even on other days the radio could not function between 7 and 9 in the evening, when the load was heaviest. Yet it was unnecessary for Chungking to have had a single lightless night. Within a stone's throw there was a coal mine which, if properly worked, could have provided sufficient fuel for the whole of that area. But a hundred miles away there was a mine in which a Chinese General had a predominant interest; from there transportation was difficult and costly. And one million people suffered so that one man might prosper.

The prices in Chungking were fantastic. When I arrived they were 140 times above the pre-war level. Within a year the prices had risen to 310 times. In 1944 an egg cost a rupee; a pound of mutton, Rs. 35; a pound of fish, Rs. 45; a tin of cigarettes, Rs. 200; a pair of shoes, Rs. 300; and—saddest of all—a bottle of whisky, Rs. 1,500!

I presented my credentials on 10 October 1943. It was an eventful day. It was the 32nd anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of China. It was also the day on which

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was inaugurated as President. The formal ceremony took place at 10 a.m. and he received me at noon. The President was resplendent in uniform and Madame Chiang glittered in her jewels. The presence of Madame Chiang at so formal a function was quite unexpected even for the Protocol officials, and the doyen of the diplomatic corps expressed doubts about its propriety.

In the evening President and Madame Chiang held a reception to which the members of the diplomatic corps were invited. My wife and daughter were invited too. It was 'the first time in history', the Chief of Protocol told Ashok Mehta, my Secretary, that a daughter had been invited to such a function. After the Ambassadors and Ministers had shaken hands with the President and Madame Chiang in order of seniority, I was asked by the Chief of Protocol to go forward. Just at that moment the Turkish Charge d'Affaires pushed his way to the front, gesticulated and expostulated in French with the Chief of Protocol, insisted that he had precedence over me, and was meekly, though reluctantly, allowed to precede. The Chief of Protocol apologized to me, saying that though I ranked as Minister, he did not want a scene to be created in the presence of the President. The fact is that my position as Agent-General was anomalous. The Conference of Vienna, which regulated all matters of diplomatic protocol, divided Heads of Missions into Ambassadors, Ministers and Charges d'Affaires. It did not contemplate that a country like India, which was not yet independent, would be entitled to have diplomatic representatives abroad. To the ordinary Chinese, the term Agent-General was somewhat mystifying. Some took me to be a commercial agent; others as an Army General—though one look at me must have dispelled the suspicion that I had anything to do with the Army!

One of my earliest dispatches to the Government of India was called 'The Song of Soongs'. This amazing family, like the equally amazing Kungs, dominated China. T. V. Soong, Minister for Foreign Affairs, invited me to lunch soon after I had presented my credentials. It was an excellent lunch and the wines were delicious. But what manners! Soong

kept his guests, including the Norwegian Ambassador, waiting for half an hour, and when he appeared he had no word of apology to offer. When the lunch was over he would not ask any of the guests even to sit down. Hardly had the Norwegian Ambassador finished his cup of coffee standing when, at a nod from Soong, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs hinted to the Ambassador that it was time for him to take leave. And thus we were hustled out. Surely, I thought, this was not Chinese behaviour. Was it the behaviour of the 'Soong dynasty'?

It was with such thoughts that, accompanied by Anujee and Kunja, I went to tea with Soong's famous sister, Madame Chiang. The 'Madamissimo', as the diplomats called her, was charm embodied. She turned on her charm as one turns on an artificial fountain, which rises higher and higher until one is wet with the spray. She had just been turning it on Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Commander of the South-East Asia Command, who had been on a visit to the Chiangs. While leaving their mountain home, Mountbatten is said to have sent a telegram to Churchill: MADAME SAYS I AM HER FRIEND FOR LIFE. WE LEAVE CHUNGKING TOMORROW.

In her talk with us Madame Chiang flitted with consummate ease and grace from topic to topic, from sarees (she had a few, she said proudly, but did not know how to wear them) to high international politics. She professed to be as much concerned with the hardships awaiting my daughter at Ginling College as with the condition of the famine-stricken people of Bengal.

I met another of the Soong sisters, Madame Kung, the next day. It was she who had first been courted by Sun Yat-Sen, but she preferred to marry Kung, a man of great wealth who was also a descendant of Confucius. Madame Kung struck me as a very worldly person, with an altogether false sense of values. I was repelled when, referring to Gandhiji's peasant-like simplicity, she said, 'Should we not raise the people to our level rather than descend to theirs?' In China there used to be a saying that Madame Chiang loved power; Madame Kung, money; and Madame Sun Yat-Sen, China.

What made the Soong sisters so formidable was the fact that they were married to the three most powerful figures of China between the Revolutions of 1911 and 1948, Sun Yat-Sen,

Chiang Kai-Shek and H. H. Kung. When I met Kung, he had already been Finance Minister for a decade. Though a descendant of Confucius, he looked like a pork butcher and had all the airs of a *parvenu*. In poverty-stricken China, he reeked of wealth, with his cars, carpets, lawns, central heating, swimming-baths, pictures and rows of footmen. He asked me what was the name of 'the Raja who is known as the richest man in the world'. Presumably he meant the Nizam, and I wondered whether he was not competing with him. A veritable financial octopus, Kung had his tentacles over every business concern, from the Central Trust to Chialing House, a hotel in Chungking, of which he was the owner. The other hotel, Victory House, was owned by Ho Ying-Chin, the Commander-in-Chief!

I remember the party which was literally 'thrown' by Kung on New Year's Eve. There were about 600 guests, mostly foreigners. It was the most vulgar party I have ever attended —vulgar in its excessive ostentation, artificial hilarity and the cavalier treatment of guests. A few minutes after the guests had assembled, a Chinese Major-General with a booming voice announced, 'Ladies and gentlemen, His Excellency Dr Kung and Madame Kung have arrived.' And at the end of the dinner the same booming voice announced, 'Now, gentlemen, let us thank His Excellency Dr Kung and Madame Kung for their wonderful hospitality. They have now to play host to an even bigger party.' At this party General Wingate, Madame Sun Yat-Sen and myself sat at the same table. We were a strangely silent trio amidst the din caused by the cats, dogs, horses and pigs, for each table bore the mark of an animal and the guests at each table had to mew, bark, neigh or grunt as the booming voice demanded. Throughout the party Wingate did not utter a word, in spite of the frantic attempts of a giddy young thing next to him to draw him into conversation. He seemed absorbed in his thoughts; and his thoughts were far, far away, perhaps in the heart of the Burma jungles. Did he, one now wonders, have a premonition that that would be his last New Year's Eve? I thought he was the very picture of Il Penseroso. I shall long remember him as I saw him on New Year's Eve, at the beginning of 1944—a man among phantoms.

There was no limit to the adoration which the Soong sisters received from the world, and particularly from the New World. Early in 1944, the Chinese Government conferred on Madame Chiang the Order of the Blue Sky and the White Sun in recognition of her meritorious services to the state. She was almost regarded as a Chinese Joan of Arc. Comparisons were made between her and another Chinese heroine, Chin Liang-yu, who, in the concluding years of the Ming dynasty, led 8,000 troops against the Manchus and defeated them at a pass in the Great Wall and whose relics—her embroidered robes, ivory sceptre, shoe, sword and seal—were on exhibition in China in connexion with the Women's International Day.

In America, too, Madame Chiang was loaded with honours. The American Alumni Council conferred on her the Order of Merit—an annual award to the person 'who best symbolized, by his or her acts during that year, the ideals inspired by the American system of education'. And it almost looked as if she was going to be canonized. Chinese newspapers published a report that she had been chosen as 'the Living Representation' in a large stained-glass window, which was installed in St John's Church, Massena, New York, and which was made up of 7,000 pieces of French, Belgian and English glass of the thirteenth century. The motif of the picture was Heavenly Worship as recorded in the book of Revelation; and Madame Chiang, described in the Rector's message as 'the first lady in Christendom', was shown amidst the flowers of China holding a scroll with a phrase from a speech which she delivered in Madison Square, 'We must try to forgive'. I was reminded of Anatole France's Orberosia, the Patron Saint of the Penguins, whom they used to propitiate with the hymn:[1]

> Virgin of Paradise!
> Come, come in the dusky night
> And on us shed
> Thy beams of light!

While the Soongs and the Kungs wielded power and money, the ideology of the Kuomintang was moulded by the Chen brothers, Chen Ko-fu and Chen Li-fu, or, as Professor Needham

[1] A. W. Evans' translation (John Lane, 1909).

called them, the C.C. Clique. Their ideology was a curious mixture of the doctrines of Confucius, Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-Shek. Confucius was the greatest teacher of good manners the world has seen, but his 2,500-year-old precepts were hardly a useful guide to the solution of the social and economic problems of the twentieth century. Sun Yat-Sen was as great a patriot as Gandhiji and Lenin, but he did not have their capacity for original thought. His 'Three People's Principles' were a hotchpotch of Western and Eastern ideas; and his conception of Government, based on American, French, British and Chinese models, had already proved unworkable. Theoretically the three principles, Nationalism, Democracy and Livelihood, were unexceptionable and it fell to Chiang Kai-Shek to translate them into practice. Chiang was essentially a war-lord, a super war-lord, who beat the other war-lords of China at their own game. His ideas of democracy were extremely nebulous; and he was too much in the hands of bankers, landlords and other plutocrats to do much for the people's livelihood. As for nationalism, he had quaint ideas of promoting it. In his book entitled *Destiny of China* he denied that the Mongols, Manchus and Tibetans were different races. He called them tribes or clans, not races or peoples; and the Chinese Government issued a circular, calling upon students of history to find common origins for all the 'tribes' in China and to remodel the textbooks of history accordingly.

One of the Chen brothers, Chen Li-fu, was Minister of Education. His slogan was almost Hitlerian—'One party, one ideology, one leader'. He was inordinately proud of China's past achievements, and claimed that Einstein's theory of relativity had been anticipated by Chinese scientists. A member of the Academia Sinica told me that Chen Li-fu's mind was 'a vacuum in which any kind of rubbish can settle'. At my first meeting with Chen Li-fu, he said, 'History is a vertical line and geography is a horizontal line, and when the two meet you have a nation.' He was a party fanatic, and his main concern as Education Minister was to stamp out all tendencies which ran contrary to the party line. Not content to control the conduct of Chinese students in China, he attempted to control them even abroad. In November

1943 he issued a notification requiring all students who wished to go abroad to undergo a course of political training. He also proposed to appoint, in the countries to which they went, a supervisory officer to control 'the thought and conduct of Chinese students'. A group of Harvard University professors took strong exception to this circular and demanded that no Chinese students should be admitted to any university in the USA until the Chinese Government had rescinded it. Chen Li-fu explained that the proposal to appoint supervisors abroad was nothing new; as early as 1871, when the first Chinese students went to the USA the Government had appointed a supervisor to look after them. This explanation did not satisfy the Professors of Harvard; and in April 1944 the Chinese Government announced its decision not to send any students abroad, because it had to conserve the manpower and the material resources of China in the final stages of the war!

In China I found myself in a new world. China was our neighbour and the Chinese were Orientals, but I found the working of the Chinese mind more strange than that of a Westerner. In fact, I had to revise many of my cherished ideas about China. In India we used to speak glibly of the spiritual affinity between India and China, but when I went to China I discovered that India had more in common with Europe than with China in matters of religion. The Chinese, unlike Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, did not concern themselves overmuch with the other world. They were not even sure that another world existed. Long ago they had put a question about the other world to their sage, Confucius, and he had declined to satisfy their curiosity. Confucius was asked what he thought of man's duty to the spirits of the departed. 'Not understanding life,' replied Confucius, 'how can you understand death?' This life was a fact, the next was only a theory; and the Chinese preferred to stick to the fact and let the theory look after itself. Hence the whole of Chinese philosophy was designed to regulate human relationships in such a way that men could live in this world with the least friction and the greatest comfort. It is true that for a few hundred years the Chinese were attracted by the unworldly gospel of Buddha;

and Indian Buddhism has indeed left its imprint on Chinese art and thought. But soon they discarded it in favour of their own Confucianism and Taoism.

Generally speaking, we felt that the Chinese were materialistic, in a good sense of the word. To them religion was not, as it was to many Indians, an obsession. Indeed, most Chinese had no religion whatever. I often saw a look of blank surprise on people's faces when I asked them to what religion they belonged. It was not rare to see three or four brothers in the same family, one Buddhist, another Confucianist, the third Protestant and the fourth Taoist. In this way they hoped that one of them at any rate might enter heaven and pull the others up! Often the same man followed Buddha in his private life, Confucius in his public life and ancestor-worship in his family life. Religion in China always reminded me of Lord Shaftesbury's reply to an inquisitive old lady who asked him to what religion he belonged. 'Wise men', said Lord Shaftesbury, 'all belong to one religion.' 'What is that religion?', asked the old lady. 'Wise men', said Lord Shaftesbury, 'never tell.' But the time was coming when a set of wise men would endeavour to mould the destinies of China, not only by eschewing religion but by fighting it in the true Marxist style. For this China, with its essentially materialistic outlook, was more prepared than India would ever be.

Throughout my stay in China, Communism was the Government's bugbear. Indeed, to the Kuomintang, it was an even bigger bugbear than Japanese imperialism. The Kuomintang seemed more intent on pinning the Communist 'bandits' down in their dens than fighting the Japanese. Some of the crack divisions of the Chinese army were employed in the blockade of Communist areas. Early in 1944, quite a stir was caused in China by a report in *Reynolds News* to the effect that Madame Sun Yat-Sen had issued a sensational appeal to British and American labour for their help in lifting the Chinese Government's blockade of the areas where the Communists had been waging guerilla warfare against the Japanese. The report said that Madame Sun Yat-Sen had accused reactionary forces in China of blockading these

areas and preventing even medical supplies reaching them. This was precisely what General Stilwell objected to in Chiang Kai-shek. His diaries show how bitterly he regretted Chiang's anti-Communist obsession which was hampering the Allied war effort. Stilwell does not have a good word for Chiang. He calls him 'the tribal chieftain', 'the All-wise', 'the Peanut', and 'the rattlesnake'.

The general impression in Chungking was that China, having been the first victim of Japanese aggression, was now content to let the Allies do the fighting against Japan. One battle, however, China did fight. A large press delegation, including many foreign journalists, was invited to visit the Changteh front to see for themselves what had happened, and the delegation returned satisfied that at Changteh the Chinese had put up a stout defensive battle and lost 6,400 men, four-fifths of their total force. The Officer Commanding, who withdrew with the surviving 20 per cent, was arrested and court-martialled. The Chinese inflicted severe casualties on the Japanese, though the number was only one-third of their estimate of 44,000. Changteh town, which had a population of 150,000, was razed to the ground, only thirty houses being left standing. The battle of Changteh synchronized with the Cairo Conference and was designed to influence it.

The Chinese Communists, with their ceaseless guerilla activities, were a greater thorn in the side of the Japanese than were the Kuomintang. The Government, however, did everything possible not merely to obstruct them but to discredit them. For instance, the story was put out that the Communists had been forcing civilians, tied together in bunches, to march in advance and thus act as a shield to the troops. On another occasion, the Government announced that they had indubitable evidence of a secret agreement between the Japanese and the Chinese Communists.

The antagonism between the Kuomintang and the Communists was bound to worsen as soon as the war with Japan was over, and the US Government tried to forestall a breakdown by deputing General Marshall to China. He arrived in Shanghai on 20 December 1945, and paid a visit to Chiang Kai-shek at Nanking, the capital which the

Generalissimo had been forced to leave in December 1937 and to which he and Madame Chiang had just triumphantly returned. General Marshall's arrival was immediately preceded by President Truman's statement of United States' policy towards China, in the course of which he declared that the goal of the US Government was the creation of 'a strong, united and democratic China' and that they recognized the National Government of China as 'the only legal Government in China' and 'the proper instrument to achieve the objective of a unified China'.

General Marshall strove in all sincerity and earnestness to bring about a unified government of China. I remember the New Year's Eve party given by the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang in their country home near Nanking at the beginning of 1946. The Generalissimo looked tired and seemed to have aged considerably in two years; but Madame Chiang appeared in the best of health and spirits. We had thought that the party was in celebration of New Year's Eve, but it proved to be in honour of Marshall's 65th birthday. In proposing the toast Chiang Kai-shek paid a glowing tribute to General Marshall. He described him not only as the chief architect of victory over Germany and Japan but also as one who appreciated the spiritual problems which lay behind war and peace. He therefore exhorted the Chinese people and in particular the Chinese army to take General Marshall as their model. Replying, Marshall, after conveying the 'affectionate greetings' of the American people to the Chinese people, dwelt on the 'imperative need' of tolerance and understanding between Governments, peoples and communities. The coming year, he said, would show whether such an understanding was possible or whether civilization was doomed to perish. It was noticed by many that Marshall made no attempt to pay any compliments to Chiang, nor did he even propose a toast to his distinguished host. The toast he proposed was 'To a better understanding among peoples'.

The better understanding which seemed to be coming between the Kuomintang and the Communists was also signified by a party given by General Chou En-lai, the charmer, in Victory House. This was the first party which the Communists

cared, or dared, to give in Chungking. It showed that they had ceased to be 'bandits' and had become 'gentlemen'. A member of the diplomatic corps remarked that the Communists could not have given such a party in Chungking in the previous year, and next year would they?

It is not my purpose to describe the negotiations which were held between the Kuomintang and the Communists under the aegis of General Marshall. At one time they promised results. After 40 days' deliberations between Mao Tse-tung and the Kuomintang leaders, both sides agreed to sound the cease-fire and to devise measures for the convocation of a National Assembly with a view to the formation of a National Government. This news caused great rejoicing in China except among the diehards on both sides, and General Marshall was described by *Ta Kung Pao* as 'a midwife who has delivered the peace child to the Chinese nation'. But, alas, it turned out to be an abortion!

While in Chungking, we did a number of journeys in the interior of China. One of our most interesting tours was to the province of Yunnan. After the fogs and mist of Chungking, it was good to feel the clear air, the blue skies and the glorious sunshine of Yunnan, which literally means 'under the sun'. Yunnan was a four-frontier province, adjoining the borders of India, Burma, Thailand and Indo-China.

Yunnan still smelt of opium. The Governor was addicted to it, and so was the Special Delegate of the *Waichaopu*, Wang Tshangky. To them, as to the late Maharaja of Patiala, the official day did not dawn till late in the afternoon. In Kunming the shopping hours were from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m., partly because of the opium habit and partly on account of the air-raids which, in previous years, used to take place invariably in the morning. During my visit there was an air-raid alarm which lasted for three hours. Brewis, the British Consul-General, suspected that this was staged for my special benefit; there was a similar alarm during the visit of Miss Irene Ward, MP, when the sky was overcast and a Japanese air-raid was extremely unlikely.

Thanks to the American Air Force, the bombing of Kunming now was rare and the USA stood higher than any other State

in the esteem of the Chinese. There were some 5,000 Americans in Kunming. General Chennault had decided not to exceed that number as it was the maximum which could be conveniently evacuated in an emergency. There were only about a hundred British subjects and a handful of Indians, one of whom called himself 'conjurer and oculist'. When I went to his shop in order to get my spectacles repaired, I found that 'oculist' was a malapropism for 'occultist'!

I had the unique honour of meeting Lung Yun, Governor of Yunnan and a famous war-lord. Unique because he had been shunning the company of foreigners. Brewis had never met him before. Lung Yun, however, received me with all the pomp and retinue of a feudal chieftain and actually brought out a bottle of champagne. Among foreigners he was known as 'the Dragon', but he seemed to me to have as much of the serpent as the dragon; he appeared to possess the wisdom of the former as well as the ferocity of the latter. He displayed considerable shrewdness in the questions he asked about the Indian Army, the Muslim problem and Subhas Chandra Bose. He was quick in the uptake too. When I said that Bose used to be at the university at which Brewis (who accompanied me) was, Lung Yun turned to Brewis and said, 'I hope you are not his disciple.' Lung Yun belonged to Yunnan; or, rather, Yunnan belonged to him. He was a pre-Chiang Kai-shek figure; and he was often credited with anti-Chiang Kai-shek proclivities. The rumours of his disloyalty, however, were set at rest by his visit to Chungking in 1945 to attend the meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang. That was the first occasion on which he condescended to visit the capital.

Kunming was a great university centre. Apart from the Provincial University, the National Tsinghua University and the National Nankai University had taken refuge here. The difficulties under which they were working were heartrending. The students went about in rags; their dormitories were worse than sweepers' quarters in India; their diet was extremely poor and they took their meals standing as they could not afford furniture. An article in the *Saturday Evening Post* described these universities as 'Poverty Campus'. The lot of

the teachers was specially hard. The highest got a salary (including allowances) of 4,000 Chinese dollars a month, which was not sufficient even for a bachelor, especially in Kunming where the cost of living was about 50 per cent higher than in Chungking. One of the Professors—a graduate of King's, Cambridge—told me that he had to be literally a hewer of wood and drawer of water for his wife as they could not afford to keep servants. 'It is great fun,' he said, 'only it takes so much of my time.' Another Professor, referring to the condition of his only pair of trousers, told me that his bottom had dropped out of existence! Professor Hughes, Chinese Research Scholar at Oxford, who had been working in Kunming, had his study, bedroom and dining-room in the box of an old Chinese theatre. There he read Chinese books, translated Chinese classics and smoked Chinese cigarettes.

In Kunming I heard outspoken criticism against the Kuomintang. Dr Mei I-chi, President of Tsinghua University, was a pronounced liberal. The Education Ministry disliked him and resented his refusal to undergo a course of training in the Central Political Corps. Professor Shui T'ien-tung, Head of the Yunnan Provincial English Teachers' College, was most bitter in his condemnation of the Government. It lived on fear, he said, fear of the USA, fear of the future, fear of the people. A stage had now been reached when anyone who claimed any rights for the people was hunted down as a Communist. The teachers were starving; how could they teach others when they could not afford to teach their own children? He had just heard from his brother-in-law in Lanchow that the teachers there had gone on strike. But the Government was impervious to it all.

The most interesting of our tours in China was to Chengtu where Kunja had been studying. We passed through the most fertile province in China and one of the most fertile regions of the world. The country was generally hilly, but whole hillsides had been converted, by a skilful system of terracing, into smiling fields. The industry and ingenuity of the Chinese cultivator were amazing. Not an inch of land had been left uncultivated; not a drop of water was wasted; not a weed was

seen anywhere. Each plant received individual manuring. Even the narrow bunds separating one terraced field from another were grown over with vegetables. Men and women alike worked in the fields. We saw women digging with children tied to their backs, or sowing with babies at their breasts—which, incidentally, women in China had no more compunction in exposing than we in Malabar.

Neikiang, where we spent the night on our way to Chengtu, was a great centre of sugarcane cultivation. From Neikiang we motored to the famous salt wells in Tseliutsing. These were a marvel of primitive engineering ingenuity. Almost the entire machinery was made of bamboo, and the brine was drawn up by, and sent to a distance of six miles in, bamboo pipes. The mines owed their existence to one Li Ping, who was Governor of Szechuan in 250 B.C. and was deservedly worshipped as a god. It was he who devised the equally marvellous irrigation system in Kwanhsien, some 50 miles from Chengtu. He divided the river Meankiang into two channels by means of a division-head of piled stones in the shape of a fish snout. The channels from these two canals have been watering over half a million acres for 2,200 years and have kept famine away from Western Szechuan. Another interesting work in Kwanhsien was a 552-metre suspension bridge built entirely of bamboo and wood. There was not a single nail in it.

From Neikiang we motored to Chengtu, a distance of 140 miles, across miles of sugarcane and chrysanthemum, which is used to flavour tea. The only places where there was no cultivation were those occupied by graves. In China, ancestors were formidable; even in death they occupied the most commanding sites, as if still to keep an eye on their descendants. It was estimated that between 20 and 25 per cent of the cultivable land in China was taken up with graves. The Communists, showing more sense than sensibility, have been burning the dead instead of burying them.

On a journey like this one observes pleasant relics of ancient Imperial China. Every few miles we saw beautifully carved gateways, memorials erected by the Emperors in honour of men, or more often women, who had lived virtuous lives.

We also saw a number of little shrines formerly occupied by Tuti, Goddess of the Earth. The earliest of Chinese deities, poor Tuti had been swept away by the Revolution of 1911, and the shrines were empty.

How lightly religion sat on the Chinese as compared with us Indians! Even the educated had curious ideas about religion. For instance, Dr Makian, President of Yenching University, told me a quaint reason for his becoming Christian. He said that he was at first a Confucianist but became a Christian because Confucianism was pacifist while Christianity was a warlike religion and suited modern conditions better! Evidently he had never read the verse: 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'

Chengtu was reminiscent of war-lords. Some of them were still live, smouldering volcanoes. I called on one of them, General Tang Hsi-ho, who was now Pacification Commissioner of Szechuan. No one could tell me what exactly his duties were except that he ranked equally with the Governor of the province. I suspected that this post had been created not so much to pacify the province as to pacify the General! I was told that, unlike many other war-lords, he was a clean-living person, though recently, when his ageing wife selected a concubine for him in the approved Chinese fashion, the girl was so little to his liking that he went off in a huff and married two women on the same day. Another notorious war-lord, Pan Wen-hua, was still smouldering and had built as many houses for his wives as the Maharaja of Kapurthala for his international Ranis. We visited the imposing mausoleum of another war-lord, Liu Hsiang, who was Governor of Szechuan until 1938. He was said to have cost the province millions of dollars in men and money, but his face was saved by the creation of this mausoleum, on which the late President Lin Sen and Chiang Kai-shek himself had written appropriate inscriptions in beautiful calligraphy. His nephew, Liu Wen-hwei, was now Governor of Siang and had large armies, some of which were in Szechuan itself for use in an emergency. His widow was said to have been responsible for raising the price of rice in Western Szechuan by buying up most of the rice and storing it, but this is a game in which all dignitaries in China indulged,

with the exception of Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Sun Yat-Sen.

There were two monuments in Szechuan which bespoke the character of this province. One was the Stubbs memorial, erected in memory of Professor Stubbs of the West China Union University, who was done to death on May the 30th, 'the anti-foreign day' commemorating the shooting of certain riotous students in Shanghai in 1925. The other was the 'martyrs' memorial', in memory of the engineers who had been sent out to Szechuan some 30 years previously to survey the prospects of a railway and had been murdered, with the result that there was still no railway. The province had indeed changed, but not much. This we realized during the inter-university sports held during Sun Yat-Sen's birthday week. Then a clash occurred between the Air Force mechanics, who were not allowed to take part in the sports, and the Police; and in the twinkling of an eye, three men lay dead on the field, riddled with bullets. There was a stampede, in the course of which a few children were trampled to death; and Ashok Mehta, my secretary, who had been watching the sports, was escorted to his car by an imposing military escort.

In Chengtu we stayed on the University campus. There were five universities, four of them refugees from Nanking and Tsinan, with over 3,000 students. As the colleges in Chengtu were mostly missionary institutions, there were a number of British, Canadian and American professors. My daughter had joined Ginling College—a missionary institution with a well-known educationist, Dr Wu Yi-fang, as its head. Life in the dormitory was truly Spartan. Kunja lived in a room with six double-decker beds. The diet consisted almost exclusively of rice, peanuts and vegetables. The students got meat once a week, but as a special concession Kunja got an egg and a cup of milk every day. Her Chinese room-mates were thrilled to have her and seemed very fond of her—so much so that they would not let her make her own bed, insisted on her sleeping on the lower berth and almost bathed her! Ginling was a women's college, but the classes were mixed. China had made great progress in, and set great store by, co-education. The girls had separate dormitories. Men students were not

allowed to visit these dormitories but there was no rule to prevent the girls from visiting men's dormitories. A missionary woman, with whom we stayed as paying guests, told me that the girls were not averse from taking advantage of this loophole in the regulations! But she was a spinster and, like Katherine Mayo, whose infamous book she had presented to the college library, had rather morbid ideas on sex.

She was an estimable woman who was out to do good in China. She had been in China ever since the Revolution of 1911. Thirty years of eventful history had rolled by, leaving as little impression on her mind as the waves of the sea on the cliffs of Dover. She was quite shocked when we asked her whether we might have a cup of tea in the morning. 'So, you are early morning tea-drinkers!', she exclaimed, in a tone which made us wonder whether we had by mistake asked for whisky. When my daughter casually remarked, 'Thank God, daddy is not leaving tomorrow,' she observed in all seriousness, 'That is too small a matter to thank God for.' And when Wu, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, asked her whether we might play a game of bridge in her room, she said, 'I would rather that you didn't, because it is Sunday.' She reminded me strongly of the landlady in Anatole France's *Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, who was so sure of herself and God, read the Bible and her cookery book, and regarded all else as trash.

I could not help wondering whether this narrow piety was not a little out of place in the eclectic atmosphere of China where, strictly speaking, there was no name for God and where a man was either surprised when you inquired about his religion or proclaimed himself as at once a Confucianist, a Buddhist and a Christian. Perhaps this attitude partly explains why missionaries, in spite of their good works, were not too popular in China. Many of the missionary professors in Chengtu, however, were selfless souls. Theirs was to sow the truth, the harvest would look after itself. If the harvest turned out to be very different from what they expected, they certainly were not to blame.

Our main object in visiting Chengtu was to see Kunja. All her class-mates turned out to have a look at us, for we were the

first Indians they had set their eyes on. At the end of our visit, one of them told Kunja, 'Your mother must have a little foreign blood in her,'—Anujee has large eyes and a prominent nose—'but your father is all right, he is one of us.' And that, said Anujee, must have been the reason why I was chosen to represent India in China!

Kunja was my window on the student-world of China during the war. Her letters threw interesting sidelights on the working of the mind of young China. 'At a poll held by the YWCA and the New Life Movement,' she wrote, 'the majority of the girl students expressed the laudable ambition to marry at the age of 25 (but not earlier); to have a healthy, but not necessarily handsome, husband; to have four children —two sons and two daughters; and to have a hand in the restoration of all "lost territory" including Korea, Indo-China and Burma, which were formerly dependencies of China. And their chief heroes and heroines are President and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, Dr Sun Yat-Sen, Abraham Lincoln, President Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie.'

'All my room-mates', wrote Kunja on another occasion, 'have queer notions concerning *Rebecca*, a film which we saw last night. One of them even asked me if Manderley was not in India. They have also got some other queer notions. They informed me that a hundred years ago India was subject to China; and when I protested they looked so sad that I felt tempted to agree with them, until a more enlightened scholar of history came to the rescue.'

The students' food in China was very monotonous and Kunja had to keep up her strength by eating peanuts. 'I am the record peanut-eater in this campus,' Kunja wrote, 'but I would give anything for a slice of toast and a cup of Indian tea.' Once she had to act in a play of Galsworthy's and took the part of an old woman, Lady Morecombe. 'I had to take it,' she wrote, 'as none of the Chinese girls would take the part of an old woman. The young men in the play, mostly my sons-in-law, acted like magnificent war-lords.' Her description of the way in which Christmas was celebrated in the University campus was interesting. 'In two nights we have had a movie of the life of the Messiah in Chinese, a musical

programme by the "Chimpanzee Club", a talk on agriculture by Pearl Buck's former husband, a programme of American jazz music through a loud-speaker on the lawn, a Chinese drama on the same lawn and, at the same time, a loud Christmas Choir, which someone called the Din of the Messiah, and an oratorical contest in which I took part.'

Generalissimo and Madame Chiang were popular with the students but they loathed the Kungs. The students thought that the Kungs were rolling in money while the rest of the people were starving. 'The students say', wrote Kunja, 'that Kung is a frog [which is a more abusive expression in Chinese than in English], Madame Kung, Mammon, and her daughter, a bandit. Once, when the students were asked to draw an outline of China in a geography class, one of them just drew a quadrilateral and filled it with the letter "K".' By the end of 1945, the students' anger against Kung turned against Chiang himself. 'I was returning from the Szechuan University to Ginling,' wrote Kunja in October 1945, 'when, for the first time, I heard vehemently pro-Communist, anti-Kuomintang sentiments from the mouth of the students. I hope this letter is not censored, but one of my friends actually said in a very low tone that she preferred Mao Tse-tung to Chiang Kai-shek.'

The time was coming when all China would fall to Mao Tse-tung.

14

CENTRAL ASIA

I MUST now go back a little and give an account of the only act which I have ever done in the nature of a feat. In the middle of my stay in Chungking, I performed an overland journey from India to China.[1] It was my second journey to Chungking. The first took 11 hours; the second, 125 days.

The first portion of my journey, from Bandipur in Kashmir to Yangihissar in Sinkiang, lay across the Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Pamirs and over the Burzil, the Mintaka and the Chichkilik passes. The entire journey had to be performed on foot and on horseback, and it took 46 days to do it. From Yangihissar I proceeded along the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert to the historic towns of Khotan and Keriya. I then returned to Kashgar, the most important town in southern Sinkiang, and spent ten days there. From Kashgar I drove along the Sino-Soviet border for a thousand miles to Urumchi, the capital of Sinkiang. Having spent three weeks there, I flew to Lanchow on the Yellow River and thence to Chungking.

I started on my journey on 16 August 1944 from Bandipur on the Wular Lake. There I picked up Rahman, cook, bearer and guide. He had been on many Himalayan expeditions and knew every inch of ground in this region. Accompanying us were five ponies, carrying my luggage. On 23 August we crossed the 13,400-ft Burzil pass, on the top of which we saw a one-roomed hut, perched on poles 40 feet high. It was meant as a shelter for postal runners in the winter, and in the winter months snow lies almost to the floor of the hut. I thought how heroic were these postal runners who, for a pittance, carried letters and parcels from India to China, facing innumerable hardships, blizzards, frost-bite and avalanches!

[1] Many descriptions in this chapter are taken from the book *Delhi-Chungking*.

From the Burzil we descended to Chillum and Godai and rose again to Astor, a pleasant little town, the headquarters of the last frontier district of Kashmir. The next five days' march was the most unpleasant of all. We rode over the stony wastes on the banks of the Indus. Though we were five thousand feet above sea level, the heat was trying and the radiation intense. Moreover, the rest-houses were infested with flies, sandflies and mosquitoes.

However, we had one compensation. From Bunji we obtained a lovely view of Nanga Parbat, 26,660 feet high, the ninth highest peak in the world, here lightly and there heavily overlaid with snow. Rahman had accompanied the ill-fated German expedition to this mountain in 1937. He told me how seven Germans and nine Sherpas were lost. High up on the mountain their tents were swept away by an avalanche in the course of the night, leaving not a trace of the camp or its occupants.

On 30 August, after thirteen days' continuous march, I was met by an imposing body of horsemen. All the officers of Gilgit, British and Indian, and all its leading Central Asian traders had come out to meet me. We formed a procession through the gaily decorated streets, a band was playing and the flags of the United Nations were carried in front. I did not know whether I was Julius Caesar entering Rome in triumph or a village bridegroom being paraded through the streets.

After two days' pleasant halt in Gilgit we took to our travels again. On the 4th of September we reached Baltit, the capital of the Mir of Hunza, the potentate of the last frontier principality in India. The Mir lived in a castle which was 800 years old, and perched on a crag with high hills rising behind it. From this castle we obtained a beautiful view of Mount Rakaposhi, 25,550 feet high. A thousand feet lower than Nanga Parbat, it was in its perpendicular majesty even more impressive. A pinnacle of ice, it rose from the fields of Hunza to greet the blue heavens.

In Hunza the inhabitants were all Ismailis, followers of the Aga Khan. It was the season of *roza*, but I noticed that no one was fasting. Or, to be accurate, one did, one and one

only, Jamal Khan, the son and heir to the Mir of Hunza. He was a puritan in a latitudinarian society. He told me an amusing story which illustrated the sanctity in which the Aga Khan was held in this region. A couple of years previously there had been a severe epidemic of typhoid in Baltit. The Mir asked Jamal Khan to send a telegram to the Aga Khan, imploring his intercession. Jamal Khan demurred. How could you, he asked, send a telegram to God? The Aga Khan was God; how could you ask God to intercede with God? The Mir was annoyed; and a telegram was dispatched. Result: a large quantity of medicines came from the Aga Khan; the epidemic subsided; and the people of Hunza regarded it as another proof of the divinity of the Aga Khan.

The people of Hunza spoke a strange language called Burushaski which had no relation with any other language in the world. Sir Aurel Stein called it 'a strange erratic block left by bygone ages'. The people were of Indo-Scythian stock; and the Mir claimed descent from Alexander the Great himself.

The next ten days' marches were the most difficult of all. Our track now lay through the Karakorams. The country was as harsh and forbidding as the name itself. It was a picture of utter desolation. For miles together not a human being or living creature could be found, except an occasional lizard which shot across our path or a butterfly of as sombre a colour as its surroundings. The Karakorams did not even have the saving grace of strength. Unlike the Himalayas they looked moth-eaten; they seemed to be crumbling to pieces. Every now and then we saw stone-shoots, showers of stone from an invisible source seemingly aimed at us by an invisible enemy. We crossed the Karakorams by means of *parris*, tracks often no more than three feet wide, with mountains towering twenty thousand feet above us, and valleys yawning eight thousand feet below, as if to devour horse, rider and all. Hardly would we cross one range of hills when another would heave in sight. We would wonder how we were going to cross that range when Nasiro, whom the Mir of Hunza had deputed to accompany me, would point to a long serpentine track rising and falling amidst the hills. Thus we toiled our way over the mountains for ten days until we got to Misgar.

In the Karakoram region, I had to cross three glaciers—the Passu, the Sassaini and the Batura. The Batura was one of the largest glaciers in the world, 24 miles long and 1½ miles broad. Unlike the Sassaini and Passu glaciers it did not stop short of the river; it ran right into it. On the surface it was just a mass of rock, boulders, mud and sand which it had brought down with it from the mountains, 25,000 feet high. While passing over the glacier we felt as if we were traversing land which had been shaken and torn asunder and turned upside down by some tremendous convulsion of Nature. But every now and then we got a glimpse of the stream moving as silently and irresistibly as Fate under the detritus by which it was overlaid. We saw blocks of ice, caves of ice, walls of ice, veritable crystal palaces made of ice. And among them we saw deep romantic pools with glassy walls, from which water was dripping like tears.

It took us 1½ hours to cross that glacier, 1½ miles broad. The Mir's yak was waiting to take me over it. I must confess I did not take kindly to my mount at first; nor, I suppose, it to me. A great hairy beast, with curved horns, it gave me a look of singular hatred through the red-tinted corners of its eyes. And its manners were execrable. It blew like a porpoise; it swayed from side to side; it put out its tongue for most of the time; and saliva oozed from it. Altogether it reminded me of a Brigadier whom I used to know. And yet I had hardly been on the yak for a few seconds when I felt as safe as Shiva on his sacred bull. No more sure-footed animal ever trod this earth. Our ponies followed us, slipping and falling and rising and slipping again; but the yak proceeded with singular unconcern, placing its feet with that deliberation with which a chess-player moves his queen. One false move, and I would have been in one of those deep romantic pools which I so admired.

On 10 September I reached Misgar, the last inhabited spot and the last telegraph office in India. I missed those telegraph poles. I had come to regard them as my companions, for they were the only visible symbols of civilization. Perched on dizzy hilltops and planted in abysmal valleys they showed that the King's Writ ran even in those desolate regions. Unlike the

North-West Frontier, where a disgruntled tribesman often vented his wrath against the Government by cutting the telegraph wires, here nobody dared touch them. They were almost as sacrosanct as the Aga Khan.

We spent our last night in India in a place called Gulkhwaja. There was no rest-house here; only a rock shelter from which the shepherd and sheep had been hastily removed in order to provide shelter for the Agent-General for India in China for his last night in India before crossing over into his agency. In the night it began to snow heavily and flakes of snow even came into the shelter. We rose early in order to cross the Mintaka pass before the snow began to melt. But our horses had disappeared. There had been a romance. All our nineteen ponies were males; but a mare, a veritable Delilah in Gulkhwaja, enticed them all to her own jungle in Murkushi. Search parties were sent out and it was not till midday that the delinquents returned, satisfied but shamefaced.

We rode along the edge of the Gulkhwaja glacier for a couple of hours and suddenly found ourselves on the top of the Mintaka pass, 15,500 feet high. From here I had hoped to have a view of the whole Central Asian mountain system, the Himalayas, the Karakorams, the Pamirs, the Hindu Kush and the Kun Lun range, but I could see nothing but snow and black boulders through drifts of fog. However, when I stood on the pass with one foot in India and the other in China I felt elated that I should have been chosen to represent my country in another equally great and ancient, and to do what little I could to cement the friendship between the two nations.

We were now on the Roof of the World, with the Himalayas and the Karakorams behind us. The region of the Pamirs was fresher, cleaner, more open, and we ourselves were so high on the earth's surface that mountains of a mere 20,000 ft were not terrifying. The rivers on the Roof of the World were also different from those in the Karakoram region. The Hunza river had been muddy and turbid; the Tashkurghan was blue and crystal-clear: blue with a dash of green, like Scarlett O'Hara's eyes, these rivers were streams of Paradise.

The Roof of the World was one vast plateau ranging from

ten to fifteen thousand feet in height and ideal for grazing and riding. Exhilarated by my escape from the Karakoram gorges I now rode hard and performed some double marches. The result was unfortunate. I arrived in Tashkurghan, the first inhabited town in China, with a strained muscle and had to take to bed for four days with an agonizing back-ache. The Chinese officers in Tashkurghan were anxious to help me, and managed to produce a so-called medical man, one Li. The Officer Commanding said he could not certify that Li was a good doctor, but he could certify that Li was a good man.

I left Tashkurghan on the 23rd of September in a children's *doli* which, however, I was able to discard three days later. Leaving the town I obtained a perfect view of Muztagh Ata, 'the Father of Ice Mountains'. A number of legends have arisen from its dome-like shape. The Tajiks and the Kirghiz regard it as the repository of the relics of Moses, Ali and other Muslim saints, while Hsuan Tsang thought that it was the abode of a Buddhist monk in *samadhi*.

From Tashkurghan onwards I followed the very track which Hsuan Tsang, the great Chinese pilgrim, took in A.D. 642. Two days after leaving Tashkurghan we crossed the formidable Chichkilik Pass, 15,500 feet high, the terrors of which are vividly described by Hsuan Tsang: 'In this', he says, 'both during summer and winter, there fall down piles of snow; cold winds and icy storms rage. The ground, impregnated with salt, produces no crops; there are no trees; and nothing but scrubby underwood. Even at the time of the great heat the wind and the snow continue. Scarcely have travellers entered this region when they find themselves surrounded by vapour from the snow. Merchant caravans in coming and going suffer severely in these difficult and dangerous spots.' Hsuan Tsang's description is no exaggeration, as I could see with my own eyes. Our track was lined by the skeletons of ponies and donkeys which had perished.

Next day we descended into the Tangitar gorge, full of hot springs, emitting sulphurous vapours, and a mountain torrent, leaping over rocks and boulders, which we crossed and recrossed two dozen times. Here Hsuan Tsang had a nasty

adventure. He was attacked by robbers and in the melee which ensued his precious elephant which, believe it or not, he had brought all the way from India, was drowned. How the old pilgrim must have wept over his loss!

In another two days we left the Tajiks behind and entered the land of the Kirghiz. The Tajiks are the inhabitants of Sarikol on the Roof of the World, a sturdy, upstanding race, with hawk-like features, essentially Aryan with a touch of the Iranian breed. The Kirghiz were more Mongol in type. For over two weeks I was the guest of these tribes; and their hospitality was immense. I stayed in their akois, circular tents made of numdahs, with a hole in the middle to let out smoke. I ate their food; and wherever I went they produced a goat and the most delicious milk, curds and cream. These tribesmen were still in the nomadic stage of existence and their wealth consisted solely of sheep and yak.

On 27 September, on reaching Sasasthik, all my companions suddenly appeared with shaven faces. I was surprised, for we had agreed not to shave until we got to some really important town like Gilgit or Kashgar. Even without shaving the wind and sun played havoc with our faces. I therefore wondered why, contrary to custom, my companions had shaved. I soon knew the reason—or, rather, three reasons: the three pretty Kirghiz girls who were our hostesses. Though Muslims they did not observe purdah and went about their business with as much grace and freedom as the women of Malabar.

All my companions were Muslims. When I was about to start on this trek the Government of India had sent me a telegram inquiring about the number of my companions and the number of ponies I wanted. I replied: COMPANIONS NONE, PONIES FIVE. Now I had 19 ponies—some of them carrying petrol for my journey in Sinkiang—and no lack of companions. They hailed from all parts of the frontier. My cook and bearer were Hunzawals; the leader of my caravan was Turki; my Assistant, Safdar Ali, came from Nagar, and my guides were Tajiks and Kirghiz. Thus accompanied by a Muslim escort, I, a solitary Hindu, marched through regions which were one hundred per cent Muslim. But the fact that

I was a Hindu did not matter. All that mattered was that I was an Indian and the representative of the Government of India.

On the 1st of October, 46 days after I had left Srinagar, I reached Ighiz Yar where Gillett, the British Consul-General in Kashgar, met me in a station-wagon. There I had my first glimpse of the desert. For weeks together we had been travelling over the most formidable mountain trail in the world. During the last days the mountains had been dwindling into hills and the hills into hillocks. Now they stood respectfully aside, pointing, like two arms, to the infinity of space before me. And as if to make infinity doubly infinite there was a dust haze which hid the few trees and oases in the desert. It was an impressive sight, like standing by an open sea.

We now proceeded eastwards along the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert. To our right lay the Kun Lun range, though it remained hidden by the eternal dust haze of the desert even as the universe is veiled in Maya. One day, however, the Kun Lun mountains revealed themselves to us, and I had a view of their highest peak, Mount Qungar, with its snowy summit and hanging glaciers.

Our course now lay through a vast desert, occasionally interrupted by oases. Sometimes the desert was sandy, at other times gravelly. Sometimes it was both sandy and gravelly. Someone described a journey through a desert as 'miles and miles of damn all'. Yet there was something majestic about it, something impressive in the very absoluteness with which it shut out all objects which might distract your attention from the contemplation of infinity. For miles together we would travel seeing nothing except dead or dying donkeys and vultures hovering over them. No one has described the utter desolation of the desert more vividly than Hsuan Tsang. 'The sands extend like a drifting flood for a great distance, piled up or scattered before the wind. There is no trace left behind by travellers, and often-times the way is lost, and so they wander hither and thither, quite bewildered, without any guide or direction. There is neither water nor herbage to be found; and hot winds frequently blow. When

these winds rise both man and beast become confused and forgetful; and there they remain perfectly disabled. At times sad and plaintive notes are heard and piteous cries, so that between the sights and sounds of the desert men get confused and know not whither they go. Hence there are so many who perish on the journey.'

Dotted here and there in the desert were oases. Briefly it may be said that wherever there was water there was an oasis. A number of streams issued from the melting snows of the Kun Lun range and drained into the Taklamakan desert, enabling the people to grow crops and fruits such as melons, pears, grapes and pomegranates. But the oases remained in the grip of the desert and a regular struggle went on. Every now and then the jaws of the desert would close and the oases would disappear.

In all these oases—Yangihissar, Yarkand, Posgam, Goma, Karghalik, Khotan and Keriya—I found colonies of Indians. The main object of my mission was indeed to see them and to give them such comfort as I could. And verily they needed comforting. Their pitiable condition cannot be explained without a reference to the political history of Sinkiang. Since the Revolution of 1911, when the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown, the young Chinese Republic had been too occupied with its own problems to give much attention to this outlying district. Sinkiang therefore came under the sway of one strong man after another, who ruled with no more than nominal allegiance to the Central Government and sometimes not even that. The last great ruler had been Yang Tseng-hsin, who ruled with an iron hand from 1911 to 1928 and kept Sinkiang free from the turmoils of the Chinese, no less than the Russian, Revolution. In 1928 he was assassinated and chaos ensued. In 1933 there was a fierce rebellion against the provincial Government under the leadership of a young Tungan General, Ma Chung-ying. The rebellion was crushed with the help of the Soviet Government, with the result that for the next ten years Sinkiang was politically and economically dominated by Russia. Russian advisers and Russian secret police ensured that the policy of the nominal rulers of Sinkiang was in strict accord with Soviet interests. During this period

the aim of the Government was to remove all traces of foreign influence other than Soviet. The only foreigners who had been living in Sinkiang in considerable numbers were Indians. They were British subjects and as such were harassed and persecuted. For centuries there had been trade between India and Sinkiang in spite of the formidable physical obstacles presented by the Himalayas and the Karakorams. This trade now came to a standstill. Indians had also settled down as cultivators in the oases of southern Sinkiang. Their lands were confiscated on some pretext or another; and the land-owners were reduced to beggary. Sometimes the treatment accorded to them was marked by a refinement of cruelty. No one could leave Sinkiang without an exit permit. Suddenly, at the height of winter, when the passes were snow-bound, exit permits would be issued with the order that the persons concerned should leave Sinkiang within twenty-four hours. They would collect their families and belongings and start on their long trek; but suddenly, when they came to a desolate spot, their caravan would disappear at a word from the gendarmes. Some perished on this journey and children lost their hands and feet on account of frost-bite.

In 1943, however, Russia walked out of Sinkiang bag and baggage, and for the first time in the twentieth century the Chinese Central Government proceeded to establish their authority in Sinkiang. The Government of India thought that this was a suitable opportunity for their representative to proceed to Sinkiang and attempt to secure the redress of the grievances of Indians and also to revive Indo-Sinkiang trade. I did what I could; but before my mission could bear fruit a serious revolt broke out in the north of Sinkiang. Chinese Turkestan was once more in turmoil.

These revolts were no unusual feature in Sinkiang. The people, however, seemed to care little. One is reminded of the lines:

> The East bow'd low before the blast,
> In patient, deep disdain.
> She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again.

But no! The Turkis did not plunge in thought but in song and dancing. An oasis people, softened by irrigation, they had always been fond of sensual pleasures. Even Hsuan Tsang noticed it. 'The people', he wrote, 'are easygoing, given to enjoyments and live contented with their lot. Music is much practised in the country and men love the song and the dance.' The advent of the austere religion of Islam in the tenth century made little difference to these characteristics. I saw a number of Turki dramatic performances. It was a joy to see Turki girls with their long trousers, smart waistcoats and jaunty little embroidered caps gracefully dancing and singing San Min Chu I. The Turkis have been charged with a certain looseness in their sexual relations. Marco Polo, who travelled by this route in the thirteenth century said: 'If the husband of any woman goes away upon a journey and remains away for more than 20 days, as soon as the time is past the woman may marry another man and the husband may marry whom he pleases.' I noticed that the Turkis had few sexual taboos. But they paid for their indulgence; venereal diseases were rampant.

From Keriya we retraced our steps to Kashgar, where I halted for about ten days. After 75 days' incessant travelling I did indeed need rest, but our stay was pleasantly broken by a number of social and official engagements in the course of which Gillett discussed with the authorities the problems relating to British subjects in southern Sinkiang.

On 4 November we resumed our travels. A thousand miles now lay before us to Urumchi. The road ran between the Tienshan on our left and the Taklamakan desert on our right. It was only a road in name, and was often no more than a track, deep in sand. This was not the fault of the roadmaker. To put a road between the mountains and the desert is an extremely difficult business. If you align it too near the hills it is liable to be washed away by watercourses; if you put it too far away, it is impossible to find a secure foundation in the sands of the desert. That has been the roadmaker's perpetual dilemma in Sinkiang.

During this part of the journey we were travelling within

five or ten miles of the Sino-Russian frontier. We met a number of Russians, for in Kashgar and Urumchi there were heavily-staffed Russian Consulates looking like Embassies. Russians in Sinkiang lived in high style and kept excellent cellars. Personally simple, unaffected and workmanlike, Russian diplomats seemed to believe in keeping up appearances abroad. They were always most friendly and hospitable to me. Sometimes their hospitality, especially the liquid part, was overwhelming. The favourite drink in Sinkiang was vodka, and I was told that while in Russia itself it contained 45 per cent alcohol, when exported it contained 55 per cent, 'so as to facilitate transportation'. The Russians took pleasure in enticing their guests to drink until they got them under the table. They did not quite succeed in doing that with us. Not quite, but almost.

We were now travelling on the Silk Road—the Northern Silk Road. To Khotan and Keriya we had travelled over the Southern Silk Road. These two roads are among the most ancient international routes in history. China has been known for her silk from time immemorial. Even her name to the Romans was Serica, or silk country, and it has been said that one of the causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire was the inordinate export of bullion to buy silk from China. Along these roads went not only silk but religion and culture. Chinese pilgrims used them to come to India in search of the Buddhist scriptures. Hsuan Tsang himself travelled to India by the Northern route and returned by the Southern. Scores of Indian pilgrims too travelled by these roads to China carrying with them the torch of Buddhism. For the first thousand years of the Christian era the relation between India and Sinkiang was intimate. Culturally Sinkiang may almost be said to have been a part of India. At that time it was dotted with Buddhist kingdoms, the most famous of which was Khotan. In the tenth century, however, as Owen Lattimore put it, 'Islam came and the past was blotted out'.

Not altogether blotted out, for there were still remains of the gracious civilization which flourished in these regions before the advent of Islam. They had been preserved in sand and unearthed by Sir Aurel Stein. The most interesting antiquities

which I myself saw were in the neighbourhood of Kuchar and Bugur. The rock-cut temples in those places reminded me, in design as well as in detail, of those at Ellora and Ajanta.

Thirteen days after we left Kashgar we descended into the Turfan Depression. In places it went a thousand feet below the sea, and after having been over sixteen thousand feet in the course of my travels it was strange to find myself suddenly below sea level. Turfan was noted for its grapes. I was told of a Chinese poem:

T'u-erh-fan-ti pu'-t'ao
Ha-mi-ti kua;
Ku'ch'e-ti Ku-niang
I-chih hua.

This means: 'Turfan for grapes, Hami for melons; and the girls of Kuchar are all like flowers.' We tasted the fruits and smelt the flowers and liked them all.

From Turfan we motored through a gap in the Tienshan to Urumchi, the capital of Sinkiang. I had planned to spend only a week in Urumchi and actually spent three weeks. The reason was that from Urumchi to Chungking I was to travel by air; and because of snowstorms no plane could approach Urumchi. During my stay the city was covered with snow, not the kind of English snow which comes as a week-end guest and politely departs, but heavy continental snow which stays till the spring. I was told that the mud and snow in front of the Governor's house in Urumchi was so deep that a camel had sunk out of sight in it! The cold was biting, such as I had never experienced before. Every night the temperature used to drop 50° below freezing-point.

At Urumchi, as elsewhere, the Chinese officials extended the most lavish hospitality to us. I met the Governor Wu Chung-hsin, and the Supreme Commander of the 8th Army, General Chu Shao-liang, and discussed various problems with them. While they politely discussed Indian affairs with me, their attention was occupied with far more serious matters. A revolt had broken out in Ili, and reports of the actions of the rebels and of massacres of Chinese officials and traders were

arriving every day. Most of the districts in the Ili area had passed into the hands of the rebels. Urumchi itself was in a state of tension. A curfew had been enforced and the city walls strengthened, and more and more Chinese families moved into the walled city for greater protection. Our own house was outside the city, and our servants were sometimes in a panic. They feared that, as had happened often before, the Muslims in Urumchi might rise and massacre all infidels. Moreover, they thought that our house was haunted and professed to see the ghost of the Governor's brother, a former occupant who had recently been murdered under mysterious circumstances.

Sir Eric Teichman has called Urumchi 'a sinister town', and we were glad to escape from it on 4 December. We left by air hoping to reach Lanchow the same day. Unfortunately there was a heavy snow-storm and we were forced to land in a godforsaken place called Ansi. The next day we resumed our journey and were again forced to land in a place called Chia Yu Kuan, the terminus of the Great Wall. The third day we flew over a sea of snow into Lanchow, the capital of the Kansu Province.

Lanchow was beautifully situated on the Yellow River. We were able to walk half-way across the frozen river—it was like walking on glass. In the other half ice was still forming and masses of ice were floating down, not in blocks but in cumulative crystals. The Chinese have a lovely name for it—*liu chu*, flowing pearls. It was beautiful to watch these flowing pearls jostling against one another and making a rustling noise as they glided downstream. We crossed this part of the river on a raft made of inflated goat-skins, roped together, that was dexterously steered through chunks of floating ice. We sat precariously perched on the raft and were safely carried downstream.

Another memorable experience in Lanchow was our visit to the tomb of Genghis Khan. Only four years had passed since Genghis Khan's remains had been brought here. Until then they had lain in the sacred Pailing temple in Inner Mongolia. The Japanese had been flirting with the Mongols as they had done with the Manchus; and one of the Mongol

chiefs, Prince Teh, lent himself to their game. Thereupon the other Mongol princes, who had been loyal to the Chinese connexion, requested the Government to move Genghis Khan's tomb into the interior of China lest it should become a rallying-point for a puppet Mongol State. All Mongols believe that Genghis Khan will one day rise from his tomb and establish a universal empire; but they were not keen on seeing him rise under Japanese auspices.

Genghis Khan's tomb was guarded by Chinese soldiers and Mongol lamas. We saw the silver coffin containing his remains. We were also shown the bow and arrow and the spear which he had wielded. More gruesome than all was a banner on which was a large bundle of human hair. Genghis Khan used to pluck a hair from the head of every one of his victims and hang it on to his banner; and there were as many hairs on the banner as stars in the sky. The Mongol lamas gave us some incense which we burnt before his tomb, reverently bowing.

On the 12th of December, 125 days after I set out from Delhi, we left Lanchow and flew to Chungking.

I could not resist the temptation of publishing the diary which I had kept during the journey in the form of a book, *Delhi-Chungking*. Nothing is so pathetic as the anxiety and suspense with which a budding author waits for the reception of his first book. The reception accorded to this one exceeded my wildest expectations. Indeed, I could hardly recognize myself in the reviews. 'A disarming and likeable personality', wrote the London *Times Literary Supplement*, 'emerges from the pages of a diary, which is in many ways a model of its unprofessional, unpretentious kind.' On such a journey, wrote Dorothy Woodman in the *New Statesman and Nation*, 'I should choose Mr K. P. S. Menon, the author, as my companion. He has a sense of humour, a wide knowledge of Chinese history and literature, an eye for the beauty of mountain and desert and a nostalgic time sense which makes him feel that the mantle of Marco Polo has fallen on his shoulders as he walks in the footprints of that patron saint of the Gobi.' The *Middle East Journal*, published in Washington, said: '*Delhi-Chungking*

is a "must" for alert students of the modern world and mind. Facet after facet of Asia's charm gleams in this modest volume, and its Western readers will find many a brilliant picture of the stony heart of Asia.' 'All is described', broadcast the BBC, 'with the lightness and fragrance of a mind gentle, sensitive, meditative and humorous.'

Such reviews not only gave me much pleasure, but filled me with confidence in my ability to write. Hitherto my audience had been confined to my long-suffering wife and children who professed to admire my writings and even compiled an index for *Delhi-Chungking*. Now I could count on a wider audience. Soon after my retirement, I wrote two books in quick succession, *Russian Panorama* and *The Flying Troika*, but alas! I did not dare to ask our children to make the index, for they were busy with their own children; and our children's children, too, are beginning to have children of their own.

Thirteen years after my journey from Delhi to Chungking I visited Chinese Central Asia again. Then I was Ambassador to the USSR and flew from Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, into Urumchi. I almost felt like Rip Van Winkle. Urumchi had changed beyond recognition. It had been touched by the magic wand of Communism. Beggars had disappeared and women were no longer in purdah. The number of schools had trebled and there were now a dozen technical institutes where there had been none before. During my previous visit there had only been three primitive industries in Urumchi; now there were three dozen. Agriculture had been collectivized and was being mechanized. The chief instrument for carrying out this agrarian revolution was the Army Production Corps, consisting of 240,000 former soldiers of the People's Liberation Army, who had settled in the heart of the country and were running 40 model state farms with the help of thousands of trucks, tractors, harvester combines and a million head of livestock. General Tao Shih-Yu, the Commander-in-Chief, explained that soldiers were best suited for this work because they had not only greater discipline but greater political consciousness. Doubtless they must be instilling this political consciousness into the minds of the

primitive peoples of Sinkiang. The methods used by them can only be imagined.

Sinkiang was no longer a Central Asian Arcady. Its isolation had been destroyed once for all. A railway had been projected from Lanchow through Urumchi to Alma Ata in the USSR, and work was reported to have begun from both ends. A road had just been built from Karghalik in southern Sinkiang to the borders of Tibet, via Aksai Chin. This is the highest road in the world; formerly, it was a hazardous caravan route, and it was over this route that Sathe, the last Consul-General of India in Sinkiang, and his enterprising wife rode on his return to India from Kashgar. Another road was being built on the Roof of the World from Yangihissar to Tashkurghan. In 1944, I took 8 days to cover this distance; now it is possible to do it in 8 hours. Thus the Himalaya-Karakoram region too, the last refuge of Nature, has begun to succumb to the onslaught of man.

The Chinese, however, seem determined to prevent the intrusion of other men into Sinkiang. The age-long pilgrim and caravan route from India to China was closed. Our consulate at Kashgar and the British and American consulates in Urumchi had been withdrawn, and even the Soviet Consulate in Kashgar was closed. The only consulate left in Sinkiang was the Soviet one in Urumchi, and even that seemed to be existing on sufferance.

What amazed me most was that Urumchi had become a predominantly Chinese town. In 1944 I hardly saw a Chinese face in the bazaar: the few Chinese who were there were herded together in a separate quarter. But now the Chinese formed 74 per cent of the population. In 1944, when Chiang Kai-shek proclaimed his intention to settle a handful of refugees from Honan in sparsely populated Sinkiang, it nearly caused a revolt among the local population. But now the local people helplessly watched the Chinese coming like locusts, destroying ancient landmarks but also, it must be admitted, building thereon.

In dealing with the people of Sinkiang the Chinese must be using a mixture of force and finesse. The force is invisible and immeasurable but the finesse was there for all to see.

When the Manchus reconquered Urumchi they renamed it, in their arrogance, Ti-hwa or 'Return to Civilization'; now the city had returned to its original Mongol name, Urumchi. The Chinese, under both the Manchus and the Kuomintang, had insisted on the local children learning Chinese; now education was being imparted through the local languages. The Governor of Sinkiang was now an Uigur, something inconceivable in Kuomintang days. He was assisted by four Vice-Chairmen, of whom one was a Tartar, one a Kazakh and two were Chinese. The Uigur, the Tartar and the Kazakh were but figureheads; real power was exercised by the Chinese.

When I saw what was going on in Urumchi and observed that the local inhabitants had been actually reduced to a minority by the Chinese influx, I wondered whether a similar fate would overcome Tibet. Would Tibet, too, be opened up, like Sinkiang, with roads, airfields and cantonments built on that high and hitherto inaccessible tableland? Would the landmarks of Tibet be destroyed as effectively as those of Sinkiang? In 1952, when Jawaharlal Nehru expressed to Chou En-lai his concern for the autonomy of Tibet, Chou En-lai put on his inscrutable smile and said that Tibet was too primitive for any socialistic experiments in the foreseeable future; and it was in the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibet in 1954 that the famous Five Principles were incorporated. I little suspected that, within less than ten years of the signing of the Agreement, these Principles would be cast to the winds by the Chinese, that the social and political system of Tibet would be overthrown, that the Dalai Lama would be forced to flee to India, that the Chinese would launch an invasion of India through the Himalayan passes, and that Nehru, who had been accorded a hero's welcome in China, would become 'Enemy of Peace No. 1' and Khrushchev, 'Enemy of Peace No. 2'.

15

THE UNITED NATIONS

IN APRIL 1945 I was appointed Chief Adviser to the Indian Delegation to the San Francisco Conference. The composition of the delegation followed the usual pattern in British days. A careful balance was kept between the Hindus, Muslims and the Princely States and between Indians and Englishmen. There were Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar, who had risen high in the service of Government, both because of his ability and his anti-Congress outlook; Sir Firoz Khan Noon, who had been thrown up by Muslim communal politics; and Sir V. T. Krishnamachari who had a long and distinguished service in British, as well as Princely, India. Apart from me there were two Advisers, Sir John Bartley and Major-General Cawthorne, and a Secretary, Brownsdon. A newspaper published a photograph of the three delegates and myself under the heading, 'Three Knights and a Knight to be'. The Knight to be was not to be, for soon the Congress would come to power and abolish all titles.

On our way to San Francisco we spent a few days in London which was still a target of V1 and V2 bombs. We attended a preliminary meeting of the Commonwealth delegations to San Francisco and had an informal and very useful exchange of views. No resolutions were passed and no decisions were taken. There was no attempt on the part of any delegation to thrust its views on any other. On colonial and trusteeship matters, Australia, then under a Labour Government, took a more liberal stand than the United Kingdom and South Africa; Canada stood half-way; and the Indian delegation expressed no views at all.

Smuts was the most impressive figure at the Conference. He was the only survival from the Conference of Versailles. His speech was remarkable for its earnestness, and he was particularly impressive when he described the role now assigned to the Great Powers. In the League of Nations,

all nations had been treated as equal. The nations were indeed equal, said Smuts, equal in status but not equal in function. Great power implied great responsibility; and for the first time an attempt was being made to link both. He warned the smaller nations that they would have to make great sacrifices for the sake of world peace. Willingness to make such sacrifices was a condition of their survival.

Noon had the misfortune to speak immediately after Smuts. He affirmed India's solidarity with Great Britain and the Dominions in war and in peace. He also affirmed, more emphatically than convincingly, India's equality with the Dominions. India, he said, had already become a Dominion without His Majesty's Government knowing it. For instance, the Viceroy's Executive Council of 15 members had 11 Indians in it including himself—an argument which was arithmetically correct but politically unsound, for men like Noon and Mudaliar represented no one but themselves. He also said that the Secretary of State for India had given the delegation no instructions at all—which was patently untrue. Lord Wavell was dissatisfied with this speech. He was in London trying hard to get the Government to agree to the release of Gandhiji, Nehru and others with a view to a political settlement; and Noon was proclaiming that India had already become a Dominion!

In London the members of the delegation were treated as guests of His Majesty's Government. His Majesty himself held a reception in Buckingham Palace where he and the princesses mingled with the guests with charm and informality. Krishnamachari felt flattered when King George VI inquired after his service in Baroda, which he had just left in protest against the Maharaja's matrimonial vagaries. Churchill gave a banquet in honour of the Commonwealth delegates and also had a meeting with them at 10 Downing Street. He left it to Eden to expound the international situation. Eden, who used to be at Christ Church with me and was a fellow member of the Asiatic Society and the Lotus Club, was already troubled by the ulcers which, together with the Suez adventure, were to bring his glorious career as Foreign Secretary to an inglorious end as Prime Minister. Churchill

occasionally butted in with a characteristic remark. He described the conception of China as a Great Power as 'the great American illusion'. He poohpoohed the principle of the 'sovereign equality of States' enshrined in the Charter. Liberia, too, was to be a member of the United Nations—'Liberia,' said Churchill, 'a hundred thousand diseased Negroes!' As for the proposed Great Power veto, Churchill thought that it might turn out to be useful for Britain herself. If, for instance, China were to raise the question of Hong Kong, he would invoke the veto and say, 'You can have Hong Kong over my dead body!'

What I enjoyed most in England was a brief visit to Oxford. Unfortunately it was vacation time. Spring was in the air and the meadows of Christ Church looked beautiful. I called on Adams, Warden of All Souls. He had been to China and was most interested to hear my impressions. He was equally interested in India. Adams, Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, and others had just written a letter to the *Times*, urging that the political deadlock in India should be broken.

From London we flew to San Francisco. We stopped at Montreal for a night. From Montreal we did a long hop of 18 hours to San Francisco, across Canada and the USA, past Lake Ontario and Lake Michigan, over the Niagara Falls, the skyscrapers of Chicago and the snow-covered Rocky Mountains. Our pilot was a perfect showman. He circled left and right over the Niagara Falls and we had a lovely view on both the Canadian and the United States sides. We also had a fine view of the Ford Works at Detroit. The pilot told a story to illustrate its enormous size. A lady visitor to these works was seen going round looking for a doctor, as she was in an advanced state of pregnancy. An official said, 'You had no business to come here. Don't you know that visitors in your condition are not allowed in the works?' 'Oh,' she protested, 'but I was not in this condition when I entered!'

San Francisco was a delightful composition of sea and hill. All round it was a bay or a series of bays and, beyond, the great Pacific. The city seemed to look with one eye across the ocean to crumbling Japan and with the other eye across

America and the Atlantic to still troubled Europe. Full of ups-and-downs, San Francisco is aptly called 'the tilted city' or 'the city in ripples'. The entire coast of California was beautiful; there was something warm and mellow and luscious about it. I was amused to see the jealousies between the various towns in California. Not far away was Los Angeles. Los Angeles was so jealous of San Francisco that the Los Angeles newspapers never referred to the Conference as the San Francisco Conference but called it the United Nations Parley. Also not far away was Hollywood. I did not go there but delicious bits of Hollywood used to come to entertain us.

At the entrance to the Californian State Parliament building in Sacramento was an apt motto: 'Give me men to match my mountains.' Another motto which I liked was at the entrance to the Bohemian Club: 'Weaving spiders, come not here!' We spent a delightful day in the Bohemian Club. The membership was restricted to men eminent in the world of letters, music and art. No women were admitted. Thither members of the Club retired for a few weeks every year and lived in tune with nature. It was pleasant to lie about in the Bohemian grove, under the shadows of the tall redwood trees, 350 feet tall and a thousand years old.

In San Francisco I obtained my first impressions of the American people. They seemed very friendly and informal as compared with the more reserved Englishmen and were ready to receive us into their houses. At San Francisco I heard a fresh story about the Englishman's reserve. An English Colonel went into a hotel and asked for accommodation on the ground floor. The proprietor explained that it would be most uncomfortable on account of the din and roar of traffic, but the Englishman insisted. 'Why,' asked the hotel manager, 'is it so essential that you stay on the ground floor?' 'In order,' said the English Colonel, 'to avoid the risk of a stranger speaking to me in the lift.'

In America I heard almost a new language. There a lift is an elevator; a coffin is a casket; an undertaker is a mortician; a subway is an underpass; and a cross-road is an intersection. In America a bill is a check and a check is a bill;

the ground floor is first floor and first floor is second floor; a road is a pavement and a pavement is a sidewalk; braces are suspenders and suspenders are garters. Americans also do not hesitate to coin words. There are not only hotels in America, but motels, catering for man and motor, that inseparable part of the American way of life. Once I noticed on the road, BEWARE OF SOFT SHOULDERS. I thought it was a moral injunction, but later I discovered that it merely meant 'Take care of the slippery edges of the road'.

The Conference was held in the Opera House, a magnificent hall which had been built at a cost of five million dollars in commemoration of the First World War. Representatives of fifty nations came together to frame the Charter for a world organization and to consider a thousand amendments to the Dumbarton Oaks proposals. The only condition for a country to become a member of the United Nations was that it should be peace-loving, and it had to demonstrate its love of peace by declaring war against Germany. Countries like Ireland and Switzerland, which had remained neutral,were therefore not invited to participate in the United Nations Conference. This led to a cartoon in one of the American papers. De Valera was shown ringing up the President of the Swiss Republic and saying, 'Dear Mr President, let us declare war on each other and prove that we too are peace-loving and can go to San Francisco.'

While we were meeting in San Francisco, tremendous events were happening in Europe. The war was mounting to a climax, and the European war actually came to a close while the Conference was sitting. Hitler fell; whether he died in front of the Chancellery or had escaped, we did not know. But, as Churchill said, wherever Hitler was, whether in this world or in the other, we might rest assured that he would be taken care of by the appropriate local authority. Mussolini fell too. Ten years previously, when Anujee and I were in Milan we had heard a hundred thousand boys and girls, waiting for Mussolini to come and distribute prizes, shouting excitedly, 'Duce! Duce! Duce!' Now his body and the body of his mistress hung upside down, kicked and spat upon by his

countrymen. On that very day the representative of Abyssinia rose at the San Francisco Conference and reminded the audience of the words which the Emperor of Abyssinia uttered ten years previously when that country was foully attacked by Italy. 'If you care for peace without justice,' said the Emperor, 'you shall have neither peace nor justice.' And I recalled the words which Mussolini's son, who was now trying to enter Switzerland with the aid of a faked passport, had uttered on seeing the black bodies of thousands of Abyssinians, mown down by Italian machine-guns, that they reminded him of 'the beautiful unfolding of a black rose'.

VE day came and went, almost unnoticed. It was very different from the armistice after the first world war. Then I was at Oxford and saw a whole nation in a delirium of joy and relief. But now business went on as usual. There was another war on, a war particularly grim for America, and the grimness of it was brought home by the daily reports of casualties at Okinawa. Besides, the international situation was not such as to inspire joy. The ogre was dead, but the apparition was there. On the whole, the American public behaved like a child expected to rejoice on some auspicious occasion but finding it difficult to do so.

I shall not attempt to give an account of the debates in San Francisco or the Indian delegation's contribution to the framing of the Charter. Despite the ability and eloquence of the leader of our delegation, he and his colleagues were handicapped by the fact that they represented a Government which was on its last legs. Indeed, when we were in San Francisco, news came that Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders had been released and that the Viceroy had invited them to Simla. A newspaper in San Francisco carried this report under the heading: VICEROY SUMMONS NATIVE CHIEFTAINS TO SIMLA.

The Indian delegation was eclipsed in the public eye by the presence of Vijayalakshmi Pandit in San Francisco in an unofficial capacity. Ramaswamy Mudaliar thought it best for the delegation to keep her at arm's length. He would not ask her to the receptions which he gave at our hotel, but had no objection to my seeing her privately. This I did on more

than one occasion. One day she held a press conference in our hotel, which was largely attended and got added publicity through the conduct of one Khan, the stenographer of Sir Firoz Khan Noon, who, without the knowledge of any of us except Noon, tried to heckle her and was turned out as not belonging to the press fraternity. The next day it was announced at a public meeting that the Government of India had planted a member of their delegation to disturb the conference! Khan became suddenly famous. His photograph appeared in the papers, and he was so pestered by callers of both sexes that he had to remove his beard. Then two photographs of him appeared side by side, with and without beard!

Of all my surprises in San Francisco, none was greater than the self-exposure of Stalin's Russia. In India we had not been encouraged to learn much about Russia, and this very fact made us suspect that Russia could not be so difficult to get on with as had been made out. But what we saw in San Francisco was a revelation. It was as if a veil had been suddenly lifted from a woman, of whose features you had heard the most contradictory versions. Here was no dilettante, no debutante, but one who was conscious of her assets and knew how to use them in order to bend men and nations to her will. Her shadow had already fallen over the whole of Eastern Europe, and 'the soft under-belly' through which Churchill had wanted to launch the Second Front was being hardened by the injection of Communism. Her shadow threatened to penetrate even into Central and Western Europe. In defiance of the Yalta agreement, Russia now recognized the Lublin regime in Poland and concluded a twenty years' alliance with it; and, on the day on which he left San Francisco, Molotov announced that the twenty Polish leaders, who had gone to Poland from England on safe conduct, had been arrested for diversionary activities against the Red Army.

Molotov was, in many ways, a typical representative of Stalin's Russia. On small as well as big matters he was entirely unyielding. The fact that the USA had discovered the secret of the atom and refused to share it with her wartime ally,

Russia, made Russia more unyielding than ever. Molotov resisted all attempts to liberalize the Charter. He opposed all deviations from the Dumbarton Oaks proposals and upheld the veto in all its rigidity.

In respect of the need for the veto, however, the five Great Powers were in substantial agreement. The veto was severely criticized by the other members of the conference, numbering 45, and Evatt, the Australian Foreign Minister, made himself the leader of the 'Little Fortyfive'. Evatt impressed the conference by his eloquence and forensic skill. A more popular figure was Lester Pearson of Canada, who had a fine sense of humour and always strove to find points of agreement between opposing sides and to put forward constructive solutions—a gift which showed itself at its best during the Suez crisis of 1956 and won for him the Nobel Prize. Jawaharlal Nehru always had a very high regard for him. I have heard Nehru say that at Commonwealth Conferences he found himself most at home with Canadian delegates like Lester Pearson and St Laurent, even though Canada was geographically closest to the USA which, under John Foster Dulles, was sullenly resentful, and sometimes sharply critical, of India's policy of non-alignment.

In the American delegation to the San Francisco Conference the man who impressed us most was Stassen. Young, brilliant, balanced and with a fine war record, he seemed destined to become President of the USA. Why he has since faded into the background I do not know; presumably because, like Adlai Stevenson, he lacked that demagogic quality which the American electorate has come to regard as an essential ingredient in a presidential candidate. Yet it is to the credit of American democracy that once in a way the cauldron of politics has thrown up men of the stature of Lincoln, Roosevelt and Kennedy.

At San Francisco Russia showed herself as a Great Power, strong, determined, pugnacious, certain of the end and unmindful of the means, insusceptible to appeasement, defiant of public opinion and yet only too ready to court it when the need arose. What, I asked myself, did this phenomenon portend? Did it mean that an organization, based on the

unanimity of the Big Five, was doomed to failure? Did Russia still cherish lurking designs to paint Europe—and the world—red? Did her policy denote a revival of the old Tsarist dreams of territorial aggrandizement? Or did it merely signify an exaggerated and—in the light of history—not unjustified search for security on her borders? Whatever the answer to these questions might be, there was little doubt that Russia's tactics in San Francisco as well as her conduct in Europe were largely traceable to the fact of her prolonged isolation and the fears engendered by it. As Mudaliar neatly put it in the course of his speech on the Veto, 'Some nations, though great, are still young in international collaboration'. To have drawn Russia out of her isolation into the international sphere might perhaps be reckoned the greatest achievement of the San Francisco Conference.

It fell to me to submit the report on the San Francisco Conference to the Government of India. Bozman, Secretary to the Department of Information, opposed its publication on the ground that it was biased against Russia and that it gave an impression of discord rather than harmony among the Great Powers. Harmony indeed! The next decade was to show how great was the harmony between Russia and the West!

The San Francisco Conference lasted till 26 June. Mudaliar was acknowledged to be one of the most eloquent speakers at the Conference, and in his last speech he excelled himself. Nations great and small, he said, were in the hands of Providence. There's a Divinity which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will, towards that one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves, namely, the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world. Mudaliar's poetry, like his politics, was a Victorian hotchpotch.

When we were on our way back from New York to San Francisco, we heard that the train would stop at Glacier Park, a Red Indian settlement, and that the next day Mudaliar would be elected a member of the Blackfeet tribe of Red Indians. In a frivolous mood I sent a telegram to Caroe, Foreign Secretary, telling him of the honour which was going to be done to Mudaliar, and adding that 'ceremony of at least

symbolical circumcision will take place tomorrow'. This telegram was distributed to all the Departments concerned and reached the Viceroy himself. On the margin of the telegram Lord Wavell scribbled: 'Shankar can make a good cartoon out of this!'[1]

To anticipate, I attended the first session of the General Assembly in New York a year later. By that time the Indian National Congress, abandoning non-cooperation, had for the first time in its history agreed to join the Government, and India was on the verge of independence. The delegation which went to New York was very different from the one which went to San Francisco. Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit was its leader, and the only link between the two delegations was myself.

The subject which interested us most was South Africa. Mrs Pandit spoke on it with almost emotional fervour. 'If', she said, 'Jesus Christ were to seek to enter South Africa today he would be excluded as a prohibited immigrant.' General Smuts defended the policy of South Africa with dignity and restraint. For a long time, the fate of the resolution on South Africa, mild as it was, was in doubt. It had been passed in the Political Committee but whether it would secure the requisite two-thirds majority in the plenary session of the General Assembly was uncertain. While delivering her final speech, Mrs Pandit developed a twitch in the eye, and many people thought that she was in tears. Whether this lachrymose circumstance affected the final voting or not, I do not know; but to our great joy the resolution was carried by a majority of one. That was the beginning of the stirring of that world body's conscience, which in 1962 led to a unanimous resolution against South Africa and Portugal.

It was at the General Assembly in 1946 that I first became acquainted with a colourful personality who sought to bestride the Indian political stage, and even the international forum, and did so for fifteen years. I must confess that my first reaction to V. K. Krishna Menon was one of vague irritation.

[1] India's *Punch* is *Shankar's Weekly*.

Even when he said nothing—and he did not say much during the first few days—he looked so superior; it was as if he, and he alone, knew all about international affairs and the other members of our delegation were but playboys, with one playgirl. He seemed to have a special animus against the ICS—a trait from which men of greater stature, like Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachari, were free. And when Krishna Menon opened his mouth the words which came out of it were barbed with satire.

Once I had a head-on collision with him. In one of the rooms at Lake Success, we were discussing a resolution on the admission of new members, such as Ireland, Portugal and Mongolia, to the United Nations. Mrs Pandit was to speak on this subject. I had prepared a speech for her, and Krishna Menon started picking holes in it. I argued my point of view and showed that his criticisms had no substance in them. This only made him more cantankerous. My voice, too, began to rise in spite of myself, and finally I told Mrs Pandit that if she were to alter a single comma in my draft I would have nothing more to do with her work in the General Assembly. Mrs Pandit would not or could not choose between Krishna and myself. Perhaps she even found a little feminine pleasure in the spectacle of two men—and two Menons—squabbling, as did Weightman, then Foreign Secretary, who said that it was a good idea to set a Menon to catch a Menon! Anyhow, Mrs Pandit delivered the speech exactly as I had written it.

I wrote describing this incident to Anujee, and in her reply she said, 'if you could have had a row with him he must be a peculiar man'. That letter, instead of being delivered to me at Room No. 801 in the Gotham Hotel, was delivered to Krishna Menon at Room No. 901 in the same hotel. He opened the letter, scribbled on the envelope: 'Regret, opened in error', and sent it on to me.

Evidently Mrs Pandit also reported the incident to Jawaharlal Nehru, for on my return to Delhi Nehru greeted me with the words, 'So the two Menons couldn't get on with each other!' I explained that I was the sort of person who got on with anybody but that I found Krishna Menon insufferable. Nehru listened patiently, and after a few moments' silence said, in

a philosophical vein, that the world consisted of all manner of people, that there were some men of great ability who suffered from a sense of frustration, that this frustration showed itself in various ways, and that if such men were entrusted with responsibility they could be of great use to the country.

Before long Krishna Menon was entrusted with the responsibility of our High Commission in London, and after an interval, when the criticism about some of his actions in London seemed to be dying down, he was appointed Defence Minister in Delhi. Throughout this period he led the Indian delegation to the annual sessions of the United Nations, where he became a most arresting figure. He roused a feeling akin to adoration in some people and loathing in others. My own attitude towards him was a mixture of admiration and irritation. I admired him for his burning patriotism, his intense convictions, his easy and sometimes fiery eloquence, his histrionic talent and his capacity for hard and unremitting work. But I was also repelled by his superior and supercilious manner. This, together with his total inability to suffer fools gladly (except when they suited his purposes), and his inveterate tendency to see more fools in the world than there are, has prevented him from rising to, or at any rate remaining in, the front rank of Indian politicians. Looking at him, I have often thought of Talleyrand's words about Napoleon, 'How unfortunate that so great a man should have been so badly brought up'! However there comes to me the sobering thought that Napoleon has a far higher place in history than Talleyrand.

16

POST-WAR CHINA

IN MAY 1946 the Government of China moved from Chungking, its wartime capital, to its pre-war capital, Nanking. It did not strike them, or us, that Nanking was destined to be the post-war capital of China for less than three years. At the beginning of 1946 there was every indication of an all-out struggle between the Kuomintang and the Communists, and opinion in the diplomatic corps differed widely as to its outcome. Some thought that the civil war might last twenty years, arguing that war was endemic in China and was now simply assuming a new form. Others thought that China would be divided. Division was the order of the day—in Germany, Korea, India and Palestine—and China too might be partitioned into Soviet and American zones of influence. The most optimistic among the diplomats expected that Chiang Kai-shek, supported by the might of the USA, would finish off the Communists within a year. No one expected that the Communists would finish Chiang Kai-shek off within three years.

Immediately after the end of the war, my own principal concern was with the large Indian community in Shanghai. This consisted mostly of Sikhs who had been employed as policemen in the International Settlement and were naturally disliked by the Chinese for having served foreign masters. Now that foreign Concessions had been abolished, the Sikhs had no place in China, yet most of them were unwilling to return to India; they had lost touch with their country. They earned their livelihood by dubious means such as moneylending, which made them doubly unpopular. Eventually, I persuaded the Government of India to put a couple of ships at their disposal and transport them free of charge to India. In the meantime, we had to give relief to the poorer members of the Indian community. We decided that married men should get more

money than bachelors, and men with children more than childless couples. Then a leading Muslim in Shanghai had a bright idea. He advised the members of his community to pick up Chinese women, preferably with children, take them to a mosque, marry them in the presence of the Imam and then claim relief. I then had to issue an arbitrary fiat that no marriages which took place after 1 October 1945 would be recognized for purposes of relief.

Shanghai, the Port Said of the East, was an extraordinary place. It had always attracted adventurers, and adventuresses, from all parts of the world. While I was there I read an interesting book by a character well-known in Shanghai, Emily or Micky Hahn. What an incredible career she had! An American correspondent, she smoked cigars, kept monkeys as pets, acted as Secretary to Madame Chiang Kai-shek, wrote a book on *The Soong Sisters*, lived in the street of red lights, had an illegitimate child by a married officer of the British Army and then proceeded to proclaim its paternity to the world in a book, *China to Me*. His name was Boxer. When Micky was *enceinte* without having been married, someone noticed a protuberance and asked her what was the matter. 'Oh!' she said, 'It is just another Boxer rising!' Lord Wavell noted on the margin of my report from Shanghai that Boxer's father had been with him in the army. On an earlier report, sent from Chungking, he noted: 'Menon has a sense of humour. He needs it in Chungking.'

Among the many interesting persons we met in China were Robert Payne and his wife. Daughter of the Prime Minister of China in the time of Yuan Shih-kai, Mrs Payne belonged to an illustrious family and her sister was in charge of Madame Chiang's orphanages. Mrs Payne had performed many experiments in matrimony with different nationalities, Chinese, French, Italian and now English. She reminded me of Begum Samroo of the East India Company days who, when shown in her old age the portrait of one of her former husbands, pleaded a defective memory and could not identify him. Mrs Payne's first husband had a quarrel with her and spited her, and fate, by living with the outcastes, pulling a rickshaw and dying of cholera. She was a fascinating woman

to meet and to talk to, and had Payne, who was considerably younger than she, in thrall. Payne was Professor of English Literature in the Tsinghua University, Kunming, subsidized by the British Council. He had the most decided views on men and things. He had fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Republicans and taken part in a juvenile conspiracy to murder Hitler on one of his visits to Vienna. He loathed the Kuomintang regime and was busy writing a book on Chiang Kai-shek with his pen dipped in vitriol. When Mahatma Gandhi was arrested in 1942, Payne felt the iniquity of it so deeply that he seriously thought of becoming an American citizen. He had unconventional habits: he used to sleep all day and work all night. When Dr Mei I-chi, the President of Tsinghua University, was asked whether he did not find Payne a queer and difficult person, Mei replied, 'We believe that if a man has genius it is for the institution to adapt itself to him, and not for him to adapt himself to the institution.'

On the anniversary of Pearl Harbour, Shen Shih-hua, the Mayor of Shanghai, and his wife asked us and a number of high American officers, including General Stratemeyer, to a dinner and a play which was to have been staged specially for the entertainment of Allied Officers and in which Mei Lan-fang, the great Chinese actor, was to have acted. The dinner was delicious; we *kanpe*'d to our hearts' content and then proceeded to the theatre. There, to our—and our host's—dismay, we found that Chinese soldiers had burst in and occupied every seat. No one dared disturb them; and scores of people, including ourselves, were obliged to return home without seeing Mei Lan-fang. Our hosts suffered serious loss of face over this incident; and Mrs Shen whispered, 'It must be the Communists' work.'

Soon after we moved to Nanking, I paid a visit to Peking. Peking came fully up to my expectations but did not surpass them, as the Taj Mahal did when I first set eyes on it. The Taj was so consummate a work of art that it seemed to soar beyond the realm of art; one touch, one felt, and it might fly into space. There was nothing ethereal about the buildings

in Peking; still less was there anything so magnificent as some of our South Indian temples. Pretty, graceful, elegant—these are the epithets which come to my mind when I think of the architecture of Peking; but it lacked the sublimity and grandeur of Indian architecture, or, for that matter, European architecture in the Middle Ages. Chinese architecture was typical of the spirit of the Chinese who had clung closely to the earth, despite the slightly heavenward tilt of their roofs and the faintly Buddhist flavour of their culture.

The only building in Peking which seemed to soar into the infinite was the Temple of Heaven. Three-storied, multi-coloured, with its golden roof and azure tiles, its spacious courtyard and the marble altar on which, or on the like of which, the Son of Heaven had offered sacrifices for four thousand years to the only Power to whom he owed allegiance, the Temple of Heaven not only pleased the senses but stirred the soul. But it was no longer a temple; it was just a monument. The last occasion on which it was put to use was in 1915 when Yuan Shih-kai, the renegade revolutionary, ascended the altar and offered sacrifices with a cinematographer in attendance. So vulgar was the performance that Republican China gave up the worship of Heaven as an undemocratic ritual.

The palaces in 'the Imperial City' with their gardens, pavilions, courtyards, durbar halls, zenana rooms and artificial watercourses reminded me of our own Mogul palaces in Agra and Delhi. The curved roofs and the yellow tiles, flaming in the sun or gleaming in moonlight, gave them an added charm which not even Akbar and Shah Jehan have been able to impart to their palaces. In the Imperial City you do not see one palace or two or a dozen; you are in a veritable maze of palaces, each resembling the other. Not variety but harmony is what the Chinese sought after, and indeed attained, in the sphere of life as well as in the sphere of art, more completely than any other people on earth. Quite a contrast to the Imperial City was the Legation Quarter in Peking. There we saw a dozen styles of architecture, jostling against one another in incongruous inelegance. The Dutch Embassy was stubbornly Dutch and the Russian Embassy was defiantly

Russian; but the British Embassy had made some concessions to local atmosphere and was not flagrantly 'barbarian'.

Outside the forbidden city were 'the Three Seas', artificial lakes with overhanging willows, dragon pavilions and enchanted islands. In one of these islands I met General Li Tsung-jen, the representative of the Generalissimo in Peking, and his wife, decked in jewels. Beyond the forbidden city was the Summer Palace. Not the original Summer Palace, which was destroyed by Anglo-French troops in 1860—an act of retributive vandalism which the Chinese will never forget—but the palace built later by the formidable Empress Dowager. She is said to have diverted to the construction of this palace a sum of sixty million taels which was to have been spent on the formation of a Chinese navy. To her the navy was of secondary importance. Perhaps she was wise. The Japanese might have sunk the navy; they left the Summer Palace alone.

The Kuomintang attitude towards the navy did not seem very different. An Indian ship, HMIS *Godavari*, paid a courtesy call on China. Anujee and I boarded the ship at Shanghai and sailed up the Yangtse river to Nanking. There the ship had a great welcome, and in the evening the Admiral of the Chinese navy entertained our Commander, Karmarkar, to a magnificent banquet. The Admiral was a poet. He read out a poem he had composed in honour of India and Indo-Chinese friendship and, warmed by Chinese wine from Hangchow, proposed a number of fervent toasts. In between, there was music, and conversation flowed freely. When there was a pause, Karmarkar, observing the rows of medals which covered the Admiral's breast and abdomen and assuming that he must have performed many a deed of valour on the sea, asked him where he was during the war. 'In Switzerland,' replied the Admiral. The subject was not pursued.

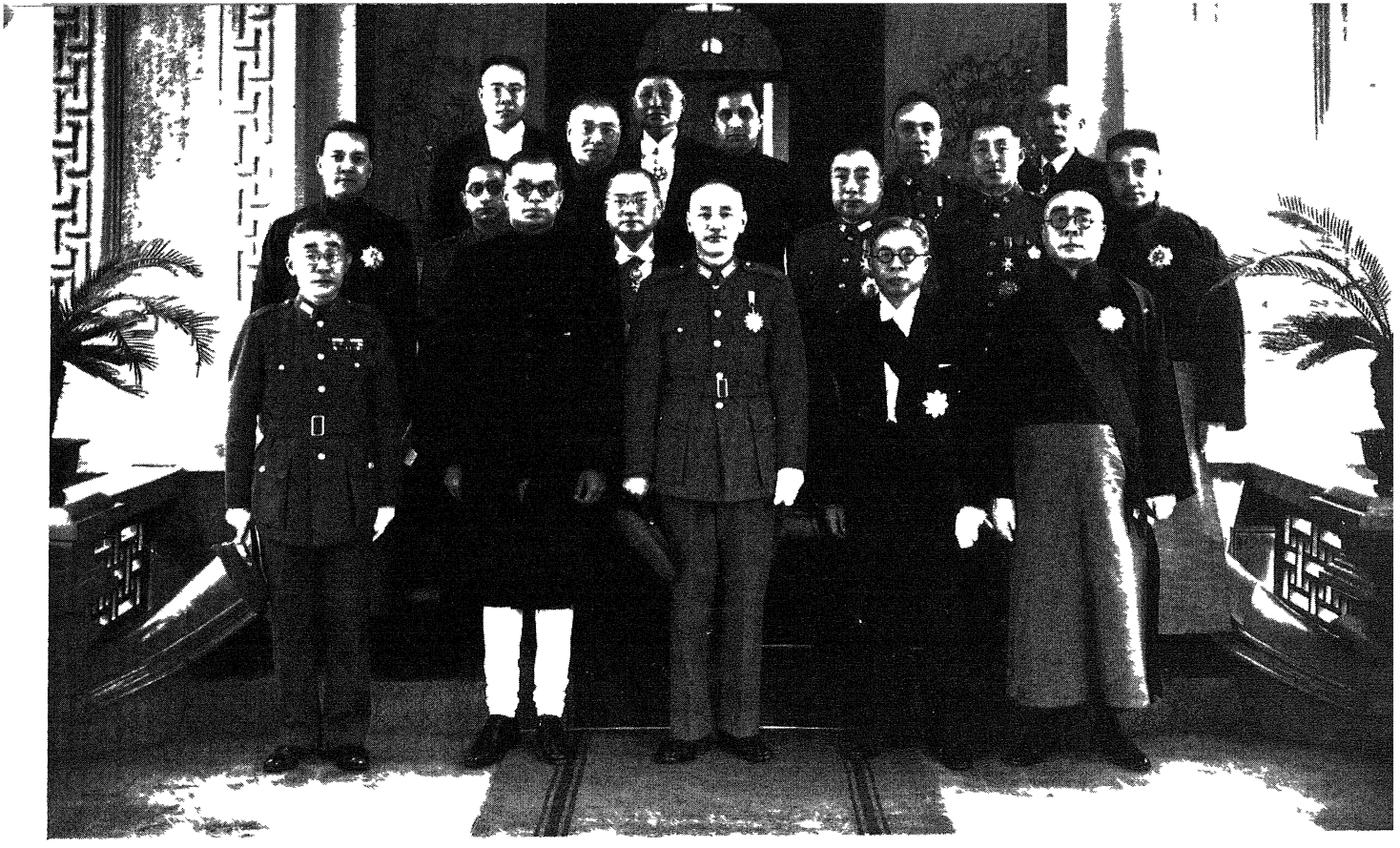
The Japanese seem to have been unusually considerate to Peking. The buildings were all intact and had even been improved during their occupation. The Japanese also looked after Peking's priceless treasures, 3,000-year-old bronzes, porcelain, and jade, and the paintings of the T'ang and Sung dynasties. But I was told that the treasures of Mukden, where the Emperor used to spend his summer months and to which

the Dowager Empress herself proceeded 'on tour' after the sack of Peking in 1890, had disappeared.

What a storied past Peking has! And now another story seemed to be beginning. The Central Government had a firm hold over Peking, Tientsin and the railway connecting them, thanks largely to the presence of American Marines, but the Communists were coming nearer and nearer. Already the Western Hills, which enshrined the Ming Tombs, were haunts of the Communists. When Sir Horace Seymour, the British Ambassador, went to see the temples in the Western Hills, he took a Communist escort with him on the advice of the Kuomintang authorities.

Soon after our visit to Peking, I went to India on a few months' leave for Kunja's marriage with Thampi, a favourite nephew of mine, who has made a mark in the UN Secretariat. After her marriage, I arrived in Delhi on a historic day, the 2nd of September 1946, when the Indian National Congress agreed to form the Government of India and Jawaharlal Nehru assumed office as Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council. India was not yet a Republic or even a Dominion, but it was impossible for Nehru to join the Government and not to be its effective leader. Quietly but inevitably he impressed his personality on every branch of the administration. In the field of foreign affairs, almost his first task was to select a delegation for the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. I was appointed a member of this delegation and have referred to my experience at the end of the previous chapter.

On my return to India from the United Nations I was appointed Ambassador to China. The credentials, by which King George VI, 'reposing special trust and confidence in the discretion and faithfulness of our Trusty and Well-beloved the Honourable Mr Kumar Padma Sivasankara Menon,' 'a person of approved Wisdom, Loyalty, Diligence and Circumspection' 'to represent Us in the character of Our Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of China with the special object of representing the interests of India' were signed at the top by 'George R.I.' and



Photograph taken in Nanking in March, 1947, after the author had presented his credentials to General Chiang Kai-shek

at the bottom, 'By His Majesty's Command, JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.' Asaf Ali, who was appointed to Washington, and I were the first Ambassadors of free India. In January 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru sent us a note for our guidance. It dealt with a variety of matters such as the use of a flag and a crest (neither of which India yet possessed), the dress to be worn on ceremonial occasions, the propriety of attending Commonwealth meetings and the scale and manner of entertainment. We were asked to remember that we should function 'as Indians and not as imitation Englishmen'. 'Our Ambassadors', said Nehru, 'will represent a great country and it is right that they should make others feel that they do so. But they also represent a poor country where millions live on the verge of starvation. They cannot forget this nor indeed should they do anything which seems in violent conflict with it.'

Nehru's note also contained a broad enunciation of India's foreign policy. I cannot refrain from quoting it at length, because it contains the seed of that policy of non-alignment or non-involvement or positive neutrality, which was to become a robust tree and under which many a State in Asia and Africa was to seek shelter from the storms and stresses of a divided world and at the same time try to alleviate them. 'Our general policy', Nehru said, 'is to avoid entanglement in power politics and not to join any group of Powers as against any other group. The two leading groups today are the Russian bloc and the Anglo-American bloc. We must be friendly to both and yet not join either. Both America and Russia are extraordinarily suspicious of each other as well as of other countries. This makes our path difficult and we may well be suspected by each of leaning towards the other. This cannot be helped.

'Our foreign policy', Nehru continued, 'will ultimately be governed by our internal policy. That policy is far from being Communistic and is certainly opposed to the Communist Party in India. Nevertheless, there is a great and growing feeling in India in favour of some kind of a vague socialist order of society. There is much goodwill for America and expectation of help from her in many fields, especially technical. There is also a great deal of sympathy for the work of the Soviet Union

and the remarkable change that this has brought about among the people. The Soviet Union being our neighbour, we shall inevitably develop closer relations with it. We cannot afford to antagonize Russia merely because we think that this may irritate someone else. Nor indeed can we antagonize the USA.'

In his note to me Nehru also made a few specific remarks about China. 'In China,' he said, 'the situation is difficult because of the civil war that is going on. I have been on very friendly terms with the Chiang Kai-sheks and we hold each other in esteem. I have been friendly also with some of the prominent Communist leaders of the North-West, though I have not met them. It would appear even from the American reports that neither party in the Chinese dispute is free from blame. If American statesmen say so in spite of their violent dislike to everything Communistic, then it seems clear that the Chinese Communists have no bad case. Our Ambassador in China, while maintaining close and friendly relations with Chiang Kai-shek's Government, should not allow himself to become a partisan in the civil conflict. Nor should he say anything disparaging to either side. Some words I have used or written have been exploited by the Chinese Government as against the North-West Communist Government. I have regretted this. If our Ambassador in China has any opportunity, without causing ill-will to the Chinese Government, to visit the North-West areas he should seize it and explain to the leaders there our general policy of friendship and non-interference.'

Considering that this note was addressed to a man who was going to be accredited to Chiang Kai-shek's Government, which had been very friendly to India and had even urged the British Government to grant her independence, and that it was written at a time when the 'Communist bandits', as Chiang Kai-shek always called them, seemed to have little chance of taking over the whole of China, one admires the prescience shown in this note. Two years later, the Communists ousted the Kuomintang and established themselves as the Government of China.

It was during my stay in China that India became independent.

The proudest moment of my life was when I hoisted our national flag on 15 August 1947. When I was posted to Chungking in 1943, I found that Richardson, my First Secretary, had taken the trouble to prepare a flag-pole, on which I was expected to fly the Union Jack. This I declined to do. Not that I had anything against the Union Jack; I flew it with pride in Baluchistan. There it was a symbol of authority and the tribesmen learned that an Indian could exercise authority as effectively as an Englishman. But to fly the Union Jack in China would have been to flaunt India's dependence.

In Baluchistan the flying of the flag served many a useful purpose. As long as the flag was up and the Political Agent was in residence, the Maliks used to send us shoals of chukor, a delicious pheasant, shot by them. When we went to Karachi for Christmas in 1938 and the flag was taken down, the Maliks stopped sending chukor. Our children decided that this would not do, put up the Union Jack even though I was away, and the supply of chukor was resumed!

Our flag-hoisting ceremony was held at 8 a.m. on the 15th of August in the presence of the Heads of diplomatic Missions and many distinguished Chinese personages. We had many rehearsals for it. Anujee was at her wits' end in trying to teach the not very musical Indian community in Nanking to sing *Janaganamana*, our national anthem. Moreover, at these rehearsals, the flag refused to fly and always seemed to droop. On the 15th, however, when the flag was hoisted, a wind sprang up from nowhere, and our saffron, white and green flag, with Asoka's wheel of righteousness in the centre, fluttered vigorously and majestically. 'This', I said in the course of my speech, 'is a historic moment in India's destiny. I also venture to think that this moment is not without significance in the history of Asia and of the world. Today India enters the world stage as an independent State. But she is by no means a coy debutante. She has been on the stage many times before in the long drama of mankind. For centuries she occupied the centre of the stage, holding the torch of Truth and Freedom in her hands and freely passing it on to other lands, far and near. Occasionally she was thrust into the background by those winds of fortune which have swept over

our Asian lands from time to time. But today she is back on the stage again—this "lady with a past," as Jawaharlal Nehru affectionately called her—a little sadder perhaps, but a great deal wiser as a result of her experiences, holding again in her hands the torch of Freedom, which was lit by none other than Mahatma Gandhi. And her children are determined that this torch shall never, never, never again be blown out.'

In 1947 India, having become independent, was on the upward path, but China seemed to be going down into the pit of disaster. Indeed, the period I spent in Nanking might be called the period of the decline and fall of the Kuomintang. I was not destined to see the actual fall of the Government but by the time I left China in the middle of 1948 the decline was complete and the fall was inevitable. It was strange that Chiang Kai-shek, who had a much larger army than the Communists; who had more guns, rifles and machine-guns; who, unlike the Communists, had an air force; who held the most fertile regions in China and the entire Chinese coast; who had been recognized by all the Great Powers and had the might of the USA behind him, should yet have been defeated by the Communists, who did not have the recognition or support even of Russia. Indeed, in 1945 Stalin told Harry Hopkins that he did not regard the Chinese Communists as a serious factor; and as late as 1947 he asked the Communists not to push their victory to a decisive conclusion. Stalin would have preferred to see the American forces tied up in China indefinitely. As for Stalin's advice as to how the Chinese Communists should conduct partisan warfare, Lin Piao, the great Chinese Communist General, said that if they had followed it, they would have been annihilated long ago.

The reason why the Kuomintang were swept away was that they had no ideal to fight for. Military factors might have contributed to their defeat—for instance, Chiang Kai-shek flung his troops over too wide a sector—but the real reason for their collapse was lack of morale. The economy of China had gone to pieces. Wherever the Kuomintang went, inflation went with them. When I went to Shanghai soon after the Japanese had left, I found that prices were incredibly low as

compared with prices in Chungking. But within a month the prices in Shanghai too began to soar. The Chinese Government established a daily air service between Chungking and Shanghai and practically reserved it for its officials. In order to discourage non-officials from travelling by this route, the fare was fixed at 12,000 Chinese dollars, which was more than double the fare from Chungking to Calcutta. Chinese officials, possessed by a rare zeal for inspection, travelled in scores to Shanghai and bought up everything they could find—silk, gold and American dollars. Thus the prices in Shanghai started rising and within a few months they outsoared even Chungking prices. In October 1945, an American dollar was worth about 780 Chinese dollars; by November, it was worth 1,900. In October an ounce of gold cost 50,000 dollars in Shanghai against the fixed price of 85,000 dollars in Chungking. By November it cost 100,000 dollars.

When we went to China the cost of living index was 7,000 per cent above pre-war level; when we left, it was 11 million per cent over pre-war level. In China I was literally a millionaire. My pay came to millions in terms of Chinese dollars, and Anujee used to go shopping with a suitcase full of ten-thousand-dollar notes. Once in the Cathay Hotel in Shanghai I asked for a newspaper. 'How much?', I asked. 'Twenty-five,' replied the vendor. I told Anujee, who was standing next to me, that after all the price of newspapers had not gone up much in China. She laughed, for what the vendor meant was twenty-five thousand dollars!

In 1948 a Chinese economist showed graphically how the purchasing power of the dollar had declined during the previous decade. In 1937 a hundred-dollar note could buy two cows; in 1938 one and a half cows; in 1939 one cow; in 1940 one calf; in 1941 one hog; in 1942 one ham; in 1943 one chicken; in 1944 one measure of rice; in 1945 one fish; in 1946 one egg; in 1947 one-third of a packet of matches; and in 1948 God knows what!

How the people managed to exist in China was a source of constant wonder to me. There were many strikes in Nanking, including strikes by airmen, teachers and judges of the Supreme Court, all of whom demanded higher salaries. A teacher in

Shanghai thrust a three-inch nail into his right temple in order to draw the attention of the authorities to the miseries of the teaching profession. Rice riots occurred in various places, and in Chengtu, the capital of the rich Szechuan Province, the police resorted to firing. In Shanghai, too, there were rice riots; and the rice-vendors gave a comic opera touch by staging a little riot of their own. They marched in a body to the radio station where a commentator had called them 'rice worms' and broke the windows. The next day a mock funeral procession was taken out. The body was that of a rice-vendor, clutching many thousand-dollar notes in his hand, and over it was a placard with the words, 'You can't take this with you.'

Students, who had always played a notable part in China's politics, became more and more restive. They started by agitating for the redress of their educational grievances. They clamoured for an increase in their maintenance allowances, the raising of the educational budget from 3 per cent to 15 per cent of the national budget and the raising of the basic pay of professors from 500 to 800 dollars. By the middle of May the agitation had grown in volume and intensity and taken many untoward forms, with the result that on the 18th the Government passed an Emergency Decree, banning all demonstrations and authorizing troops to disperse them. In a statement issued on this day Chiang Kai-shek declared that 'it is apparent that the Communists have directly or indirectly been backing such movements' and that drastic measures would be taken against irresponsible agitators. These measures, however, had precisely the opposite effect of what was intended. In Nanking a demonstration of some 3,000 students of various universities, which, as we ourselves saw, was completely peaceful, was rudely dispersed by the police and a number of students were injured. In Peking and Shanghai too such incidents occurred. The result was that the students in a number of universities went on strike; and even the students of the Ginling College for women, in which Malathi and Malini were studying, staged a sympathetic strike.

Gradually the nature of the students' demands changed. They began to demand that the Emergency Decree of the 18th of May should be withdrawn, that civil liberties should be

respected, that the civil war should be stopped, and that corrupt officials should be punished and their property confiscated. One of the scrolls displayed by the students in front of the Executive Yuan had the words:

> Heaven weeps and the earth sorrows;
> The people are lean and officials are fat.

And a Chinese poem appeared in the *Yenching University News* reflecting the attitude of the students towards the 'democratic Government' of Chiang Kai-shek:

Speaking of Democracy

Life is bitter; life is cruel;
Take a look at China and the 'people's rule'.
They say:
You are the 'people', I am the 'rule',
What I say, you must do, you fool.
You plough the fields in heat and rain,
I build the barns and store your grain.
You toil and spin in grief and pain,
I sell the cloth and reap the gain.
You place the brick and lay the tile,
But I move in and live in style.
All the young and strong must conscripts be,
They shoulder a gun and fight for me.
To buy and sell merchants are free,
But 'love-the-country gifts' are sent by me.
The scholars' minds are clear as a gem,
Official jargon can't fool them,
But we grab a chance to give them a cue,
For a 'patriotic parade' or two.
You thick-skinned workers, rough and green,
Are nothing but a 'living machine'.
When I see your sweated brow,
You remind me of a cow.
I skin you and eat you,
I strip you and beat you.
And if my orders you resist,
Then, of course, you're a Communist!

What exasperated the people most was the spectacle of a handful of men living at the height of luxury while the people were eating roots of grass and the bark of trees. Not only were there hordes of blackmarketeers, racketeers and hoarders, but corruption had reached, and indeed, emanated from, the top. Chiang Kai-shek was reputed to be personally incorruptible but was surrounded by men who had no scruples. In Shanghai I was told that a Chinese Company, of which Madame Chiang's brother, T. V. Soong, was the leading figure, had bought up a number of large concerns, including the Cathay Mansions and the Metropole Hotel which had belonged to the Sassoons. Strickland, the manager of a well-established business firm in Shanghai, told me that Dr H. H. Kung, the brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek, had offered him 75 million dollars for his house, for which he had barely expected 30. The *Central Daily News* revealed that out of the total foreign exchange released to business men between March 1946 and February 1947, 87 per cent went to the Fu Chung and Yangtze Development Corporations owned by the Kung and Soong families. This caused a sensation; and the next day the *Central Daily News* issued a correction to the effect that a decimal point had been left out and that the actual amount released to the two Corporations was not 87 but 8·7 per cent of the total. The public, however, believed the original version, and the *Shun Pao* editorially demanded that the Central Bank of China should divulge a complete list of the firms to which foreign exchange had been issued and the amounts issued to each.

Under pressure of public opinion, the Chinese Government issued an order requiring holders of overseas assets to disclose them immediately, under pain of severe penalties. No one, however, took this order seriously, for the small group of men who held fabulous amounts in the USA showed themselves to be above the law. They had already transferred their holdings to the accounts of Chinese or other residents abroad and the banks abroad expressed their inability to disclose the accounts of their customers. Dr H. H. Kung, who had been Finance Minister for ten years and had accumulated a vast personal fortune, created considerable amusement by stating

that he had only 30,000 US dollars in American banks! In order to ward off public anger, T. V. Soong announced a donation of 300,000 million Chinese dollars to the State for the relief of war widows and orphans. This amount was supposed to represent the value of the shares he held in the Yangtze Development Corporation. The Corporation had been the target of much criticism, and by making this donation Dr Soong saved himself and the Corporation from official investigation and won much praise for his 'magnificent bounty', as the *China Press* called it. 'This donation', said the *China Press*, 'is a mark of the patriotism and selflessness which Dr Soong has shown on many occasions when the nation was faced with a crisis.' By this act Dr Soong staged a comeback into public life, and was appointed Governor of Kwantung!

In 1947 the Communists won a series of impressive military victories. The Kuomintang clutched at any straw to boost the morale of its followers. In March 1947 it made much of the fall of Yenan. From the military point of view, this 'ghost city' was not worth a single shot; it had been not the capital, but merely a hide-out of the Communists. To them the evacuation of Yenan was but an incident in the general tactics which they had employed with great effect against the Japanese and which they were now employing against the Kuomintang. Mao Tse-tung once described the strategy of the Communist army thus:

> When the enemy advances, we retreat!
> When the enemy halts, we harass!
> When the enemy seeks to avoid battle, we attack!
> When the enemy retreats, we pursue!

The fall of Yenan did not check the tide of war. In the middle of 1947 this tide was running strongly in favour of the Communists. In Honan the Communists continued their siege of Anyang and managed to capture the airfield outside the town; in Shensi they captured Sanyuan, a highway town, 25 miles north-east of Sian; in Shansi the Government rushed airborne reinforcements to relieve the pressure on Taiyuan, the capital of the Province; and in Shantung the Government

performed the remarkable feat of bombing its own crack 74th Division and inflicting serious injuries! In Manchuria the Communists began to use large forces, with the initial objective of disrupting the railway lines radiating from Changchun, and the ultimate objective of capturing Changchun itself. In July they reached the suburbs and a serious battle developed in Szepingkai, a strategic railway town on the Mukden-Changchun railway, which changed hands many times and eventually fell to the Communists.

By the autumn of 1947 the Communists had started pushing southwards into the Yangtze region and even threatened the Shanghai-Nanking railway line. I owe them a personal grudge, for we had planned to go by train and road to Chufu, the birthplace of Confucius. The Ministry of National Defence, however, informed us that owing to the presence of Communists it was not safe. I was greatly disappointed, for if I had been able to perform a pilgrimage to the Temple of Confucius I would have been one up over my diplomatic colleagues to whom such a thought never seemed to occur. We were to have been accompanied on our journey by Confucius' own descendant in the 77th generation, one Kung Teh-chien, a member of the People's Political Council. Kung could trace his descent in an unbroken line to Confucius in the 5th century B.C., a feat which only a Chinese could perform!

The point nearest to the Communist front to which I could go was Tsinan. There we felt as if we were almost inside the war-zone. The city was full of soldiers, pillboxes and barricades. A huge moat, 8 metres wide and 6 metres deep, was being dug outside the city walls. I was told that its effect was expected to be psychological; it gave a sense of security to the 800,000 citizens. From Tsinan radiated a number of railways—to Tientsin in the north, to Tsingtao in the east, to Suchow and Nanking in the south and to Kaifeng and Sian in the west. But none of them was working except in patches; they had all been disrupted by the Communists. The principal means of transportation to Tsinan was the air-line which carried passengers and all kinds of freight, including even coal, of which Tsinan was crucially short, most of the coal-mines being under Communist control. Indeed, Communist bands

were roaming within twenty miles of Tsinan, and the farthest we ventured out was ten miles to see the Dragon's Tail Monastery—a beauty-spot with tall cliffs of weird shapes, reminding me of the Dolomites, and covered with maple of the most vivid red. With armed lorries in front and behind and watch-towers on every hill-top, we felt as if we were moving about in Waziristan in the days of the Fakir of Ipi. The provincial authorities were most solicitous of our personal safety. Armed sentries followed us everywhere and kept guard even when we were in the WC!

Caught between the tide of Communist victories and the sea of Kuomintang corruption, the USA was in a dilemma. General Wedemeyer paid a visit to China in the summer of 1947 on a fact-finding mission, and his findings were most disconcerting. He indulged in some plain speaking in a statement issued on the eve of his departure in September. He condemned the 'apathy and lethargy' prevalent in China, 'the abject defeatism of many Chinese,' 'the tendency to blame outside influences and seek outside assistance,' the presence of 'incompetent and corrupt officials who now occupy many posts of responsibility in the Government' and 'whose conduct is notoriously marked by greed or incompetence or both', and the need 'to put into effect immediately drastic and far-reaching political and economic reforms'. 'Recovery', Wedemeyer said, 'awaits inspirational leadership and a moral and spiritual resurgence which can come only from within China.'

Instead of taking to heart the warnings of a friend, the Chinese turned against him and his country for having made them lose face. Some members of the Cabinet said that the repeated mistakes made by the United States during and after the war were responsible for the Chinese people's sorry plight. For instance, the late President Roosevelt, it was said, 'had no business to cheat himself and the world by signing the worthless Yalta agreement at the expense of China'. That was responsible for the present situation in Manchuria. General Chang Chun, the Premier, issued a petulant statement, complaining that 'General Wedemeyer paid more attention to people outside the Government than in it,' that 'there were many things he

did not know,' that 'he did not hold any "serious" discussions' and that 'there would be no change in Chinese domestic policy as a result of Wedemeyer's statement'.

Despite this recalcitrant attitude, the US Government came to the conclusion that they had no alternative but to support the Kuomintang. The American Advisory Group announced that they proposed to assist in the training of Chinese infantry divisions and sent a reconnaissance mission to Taiwan, which was selected as the training-ground. Until then the American Advisory Group had been strictly advisory, and its advice confined to technical matters; the Group had refrained from doing anything which might be construed as taking sides in the civil war. Now the USA was going to train and to equip one set of Chinese to fight another.

A few weeks later General Marshall announced that the US Government would also give financial aid to the Chinese Government. Pressed to mention a figure, he said that the loan would be in the region of 300 million US dollars. This caused grievous disappointment. 3,000 million dollars, said the Minister for Economic Affairs, would more accurately represent China's need. In official circles the proposed loan was described as 'a drop in the bucket' and 'a drizzle in drought'. Dr Sun Fo went even further and remarked that American friendship was 'not dependable' and that China must depend on herself for her salvation. He even said that, after learning the results of the Wedemeyer report to President Truman, 'China would have to study whether it would be better for her to side with the United States or with Russia'. The Shanghai *Evening Post and Mercury*, an American paper, remarked that Dr Sun Fo 'has put China on the auction block, offering herself to the highest bidder as between the Soviet Union and the United States, and at the same time indulging in a little smooth blackmail as a means of forcing the bidding up.'

There was no need to force the bidding up, for the USA was only too willing to help the Kuomintang. Bullitt paid a visit to China and started a campaign with the slogan, 'Keep China out of the hands of Stalin'. He praised Chiang Kai-shek as a man whose wisdom and foresight had rarely been surpassed in the annals of history. A US Armed Services Committee

also visited China and solemnly expressed the view that 'in spite of alleged, and, in many respects, admitted corrupt practices in the Chinese National Government, it is highly preferable that the United States have a free, though immoral, Government in China, than to have a hostile Government —no matter how pure and moral—dominated by Communist influences'. And on this principle, which was subsequently applied, with dismal results, in Korea, Indo-China and the Middle East, the US Government doled out billions of dollars to save Kuomintang China. But the Kuomintang was beyond salvation.

At this stage I was asked to go to Seoul as a member of the United Nations Commission on Korea. My experiences in Korea will be described in a later chapter. Hardly had I returned to Nanking from Korea early in 1948 when I was posted as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. I paid a farewell call on President Chiang Kai-shek; and he impressed on me how great a menace Communism was, not merely for China but for all Asia.

My wife and I, together with our daughters, Malathi and Malini, were invited to lunch with Madame Chiang. She was her usual charming, garrulous self. She teased Malini about her approaching marriage, talked about her own marriage 21 years ago and gave us small presents, including one for Nehru and his daughter, Indira. And I presented her with a copy of my book, *Delhi-Chungking*. Madame Chiang also told us a number of anecdotes, one of which is worth repeating. In her first encounter with Churchill at the Cairo conference in 1943, there took place the following conversation:

CHURCHILL: You do not like me, do you?

MADAME CHIANG: What makes you think so?

C: Because we do not see eye to eye on a number of problems.

MME: For instance?

C: You are an internationalist; and I am a nationalist.

MME: So you are a nationalist? May I publish that in the American papers?

C: No, this is not meant for publication.

MME: What else?

C: There is India, for instance. You think India is a nation: I say it is a continent. (*And then Churchill gave a long harangue about India's numerous races, languages and religions and their irreconcilability.*)

MME: Do you think America is a nation?

C: Most certainly, yes.

MME: Your description of India applies equally to the United States—and most emphatically to the United States a hundred years ago.

C: But that was a hundred years ago. I tell you, India is not, and can never be, a nation.

MME: If she is left to herself, India will become as great and powerful a nation as the United States.

Madame Chiang said that when Churchill went to say good-bye to her, the following conversation ensued:

C: Now tell me, what do you think of me?

MME: Shall I tell you truly?

C: Yes.

MME: You are sure you won't be annoyed?

C: No, go ahead.

MME: I have come to the conclusion that your bark is worse than your bite.

During our last few days in Nanking we were overwhelmed by a number of farewell parties. We ourselves gave a farewell party to a large gathering of Chinese and other foreign friends. I also seized the occasion to present to the Chinese Government a few Indian paintings, given by the Government of India. These were accepted on behalf of the Chinese Government by Wang Shih-chieh, Foreign Minister, himself a connoisseur and collector of no mean order. Our party was a success. It would not have been such a success if my office had not cannily withheld from me the latest circular from the Government of India, prohibiting the serving of drinks at official parties.

Many a gesture of friendship was shown to us during our last days in China. What touched us most was that Madame Sun Yat-Sen herself came to the airfield to see us off: she went

there in the morning and, learning that the departure of the plane had been delayed by six hours, came again in the evening. We appreciated this gracious gesture all the more because it was totally unexpected and unusual. For a number of years she had been living in virtual retirement. In her eyes things had not been going well in China; they had certainly not gone in accordance with her husband's plans. Not for her, therefore, the company of Government officials and of foreign diplomats who generally swam with the tide.

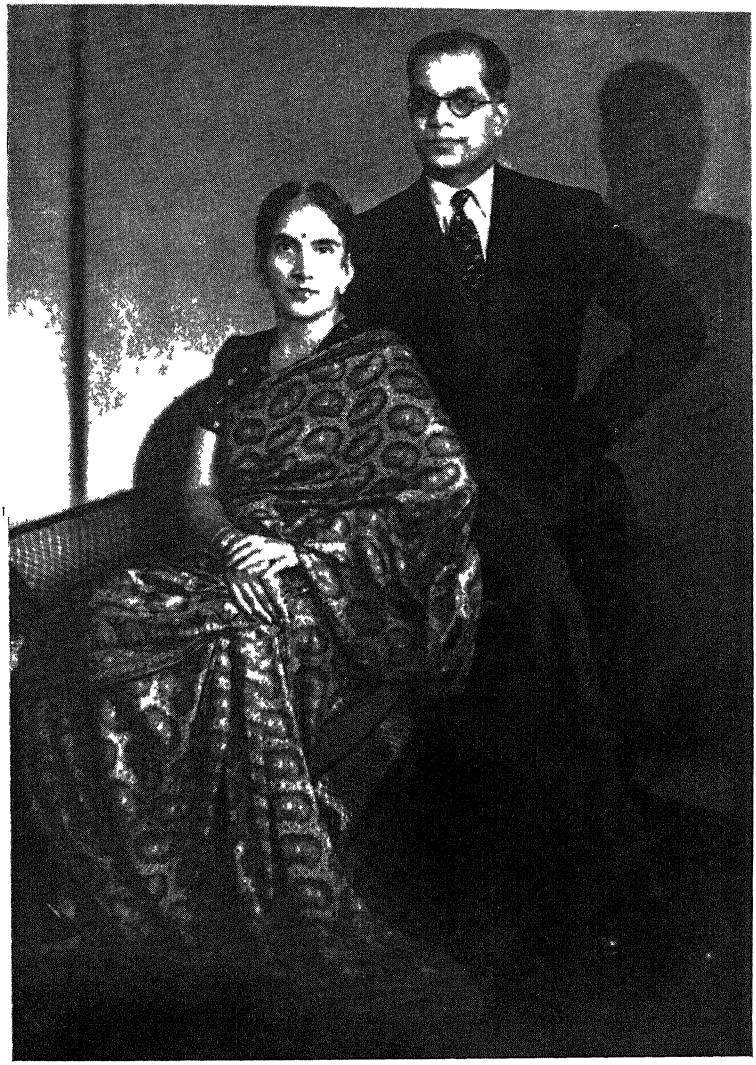
When I saw from the plane the retreating figure of Madame Sun Yat-Sen, I reflected how, if this woman, 'this shadow with a flame behind it,' were to emerge out of her self-imposed seclusion, she could light up the history of her people and lead them through the middle path, free from the clash of conflicting ideologies, into the Promised Land—promised by her husband and, alas, perpetually receding. But the 'Glorious Middle State' was no longer in a position to follow the 'middle way' to which it had adhered gracefully for over two thousand years. The wantonness of the Right had pushed it to the extreme Left. The time was gone when China could be saved by Madame Sun Yat-Sen or by her husband's 'Three People's Principles'. China could now be saved only by fire and sword and the holy ghost of Karl Marx, which had taken a new and congenial form in Mao Tse-tung.

17

JAPAN

TOWARDS the end of 1947, we paid a brief visit to Japan. Rama Rau, our Ambassador in Tokyo, and Shanta, his charming and talented daughter, spared no pains to make our visit interesting. Thanks to them we saw something of the Japanese countryside as well as the Tokyo-Yokohama and Osaka-Kobe area which had been badly bombed and battered. We visited a number of scenic spots and historic monuments in and around Kyoto. We stayed in Japanese hotels and had Japanese dinners, with raw fish and geisha girls, all complete. We saw the *Kabuki*, an old-style Japanese play, which showed how addicted the Japanese were to tradition, and the Takarazuka All-Girl Troupe, a Westernized species of musical drama, which showed how perfect was their genius for imitation.

On the day after our arrival in Tokyo, Anujee and I were walking along a main street, watching the Japanese menfolk, so grave and solemn as compared with the Chinese, their women in multicoloured kimonos, refreshingly different from the monotonous blue of modern Chinese women's dress, and their cherubic children. Suddenly we were stopped by a policeman. There was a few minutes' commotion, followed by a strange silence. Pedestrians ran hither and thither; policemen blew their whistles; and all traffic came to a standstill. We wondered what was afoot. Was the Emperor making one of his occasional appearances in Tokyo? Or had there been, unfelt by us, an earth tremor which might lead to an earthquake? Then a hundred odd men in front of an imposing building formed themselves into two lines; and between them a youngish-looking old General strode with quick, firm steps and disappeared into a vast building. General MacArthur had arrived in office! I was told that this ritual was repeated four times a day for 364 days in the year; only on Christmas Day did MacArthur deign not to attend office.



The author and his wife in 1947

There is a cliche in cheap English novels which never ceases to irritate me, 'the inscrutable Oriental'. Yet I cannot think of a better phrase to describe the expression on the faces of the men who had been waiting for a glimpse of MacArthur. What had brought them there? Was it idle curiosity? Or was it hero-worship—worship of the conqueror who had done deeds which their own heroes, who at that very moment were being tried as war criminals, had failed to perform? Or was it out of gratitude that they bowed to MacArthur, gratitude towards the representative of a mighty nation which seemed to be treating them more generously than they had hoped in their wildest dreams? Or—profane thought—were they just pulling the General's leg?

On the morrow of this incident, I met the General himself. Anujee and I had the honour of being invited to lunch with the MacArthurs. Rama Rau had told us exactly what course the lunch would take, for even about an informal meal with MacArthur there was a certain formality, lest one should forget that one was meeting one of the world's great men. Mrs MacArthur received us cordially and engaged us in agreeably insignificant conversation. Exactly half an hour later, the General came, kissed his wife, shook hands with us and said, 'I offer you the hospitality of Japan'—words which, in the mouth of another, would have been effrontery, but in him seemed perfectly natural. We then went in to lunch. There followed the longest, and in some ways the most eloquent, monologue to which I have ever listened outside the theatre. For a whole hour, the General talked, interrupted solely by an approving nod or an admiring smile from his adoring wife. Once or twice, when he was holding forth on China, where I had just spent four years, I plucked up sufficient courage to make a remark or put a question, but he took no notice of it, and I felt as foolish as a schoolboy who starts hiccoughing during a noble sermon. Reflective, meditative, assertive, reminiscent, prophetic, MacArthur went on talking, wrapping up modern events in the mantle of history, of which, we were left in no doubt, he was maker as well as observer. Here, we thought, was a man completely sure of himself, a man who had not merely opinions but convictions, a man who, left to himself,

would not hesitate to 'grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire' and 're-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire'.

The story goes that MacArthur, when asked who his principal advisers were, replied, 'Julius Caesar and George Washington'. He might have added Jesus Christ. Referring to his achievements in Japan, MacArthur told us that for the first time in history an attempt was being made to apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to the affairs of men. On the whole, listening to him, we felt enthralled, exalted and a little mystified. We had lunched with a Man of Destiny.

The Japanese seemed content and indeed eager to leave their destinies in his hands. They saw the occupation of Japan proceeding in a most unusual fashion. MacArthur represented it to us not as a military occupation, not even as a political expedient, but as a spiritual mission. In Japan what John Gunther calls 'the spring-mindedness' of the Americans was in full play—their youthfulness, buoyancy, naivete, idealism and impetuosity; and MacArthur was a mixture of them all. He told me that, unlike all previous conquerors in history, he was not content with maintaining law and order; he was concentrating on fundamentals, material as well as spiritual. In the material sphere the problems of food, clothing and hygiene were receiving greater attention than ever before. No foreigner was permitted to buy rice, fish or raw fruit in Japan; they were reserved, as Lady Gascoigne, the wife of the British Ambassador, told me, 'for the dear Japanese'. The US Government was spending a million dollars a day in Japan, and American experts were making an intensive study of Japan's social and economic problems. Hence there was no starvation or malnutrition, and the mortality rate of infants and adults in Tokyo was less than in New York. Indeed so massive was American benevolence in Japan that an envious Chinese remarked that China would have been better off if she had chosen to fight against, rather than with, the USA.

MacArthur's greatest claim was not that he had conferred material benefits on Japan, but that he had effected a moral renaissance. He claimed that he had removed the more serious impediments in the way of democratic government. He had purged the public services—and among the casualties was

Yonezawa, whom we had known as Japanese Consul-General in India in the 'thirties. He had reduced the power of the *Zaibatsu*, resembling a combination of Krupps in Germany and the Soong-Kung clique in Kuomintang China. He had encouraged the formation of trade unions. He had introduced land reforms. He had abolished Shintoism as the state religion. He had even transformed the Emperor from God to man. And all these drastic changes had been effected not merely with the acquiescence but with the cooperation of the Japanese, some of whom even expressed a desire that, after the occupation ceased, MacArthur should stay on in Japan as shogun.

I had doubts how long this strange politico-spiritual reformation would endure, how deep were its roots and how significant its symptoms. One even wondered whether the example of a Supreme Commander, wielding unlimited power and producing, as a magician out of his hat, decrees which affected the fundamentals of the Japanese social, political and economic system, was a good object-lesson for a people who, in their recent militarist past, had been taught that there was no greater virtue than obedience to authority. Ultimately, the Japanese attitude towards the Occupation Authorities in general and towards MacArthur in particular was a reflection of that respect for power which is ingrained in every Japanese. It was also due to the canny hope that the more the Japanese cooperated with the Occupation Forces the sooner those Forces would depart.

Soon after leaving Japan, I was appointed India's representative to the United Nations Commission on Korea. Great indeed was the contrast between Japan and Korea, between the attitude of the Japanese towards General MacArthur and of the Koreans towards General Hodge. In Japan there was a monotonous, unquestioning and almost uncanny acquiescence in military occupation; in Korea there was a restless, intuitive and all-pervasive rebelliousness against it. In Japan MacArthur was

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword;
> The observed of all observers.

In Korea, Hodge, a plain, blunt soldier, was the target of universal criticism. Indeed, Hodge-baiting was a favourite hobby in Korea; and I could not help wondering whether in the long run Hodge-baiting in Korea would not prove to be a more healthy sign of democracy than MacArthur-worship in Japan.

While we were in Japan the trial of Japanese war criminals, including Admiral Tojo, was in progress and we watched the proceedings of the War Crimes Tribunal. To the foreigners in Tokyo, the trial had all the lure of a glittering social event. Men and women flocked to it, oblivious of the fact that great issues affecting human lives and international law were at stake. The Japanese accused behaved with the stoic dignity of tragic characters. Admiral Tojo in particular was an impressive figure; and in cross-examination he proved himself more than a match for the prosecution counsel. He had nothing to hide, nothing to extenuate; not a word of regret escaped his lips. He bore the full responsibility for Pearl Harbour and for all the measures which Japan had been forced to take in waging a 'defensive war'. Before the trial Admiral Tojo's stock had gone down, not because he had waged war, but because he did not win it. Moreover, he did not even know how to commit suicide adequately. But now he became a hero.

The result of the trial was a foregone conclusion. Justice Pal, the Indian judge on the Tribunal, however, wrote a monumental judgment, dissenting from his colleagues, and held that the charges against Tojo had not been proved. The Japanese were impressed by his judgment; and one of the condemned men, General Itagaki, composed a poem called 'Swan Song':

> In the Court of Justice,
> Before which I sat, for a couple of years past,
> To me this document alone is dear and precious.
>
> When I read this document,
> Written by a superior man,
> I thought it was a light,
> Shining in this age of darkness.

It will shine a century hence, I thought,
Yet I see it now, this document fair,
With mine own eyes.

It was gratifying to see that the view taken by Justice Pal was later endorsed in a book called *Politics, Trials, and Errors* by Lord Hankey.

MacArthur's supreme achievement was to strip the Emperor of Japan of his divinity and to convert him from God to man. In doing so, I asked myself, did he not strengthen, rather than weaken, the Imperial institution by investing it with a modern instead of a medieval halo? In this godless century, a god-king might have gone with the wind, as the gods themselves have done, but not a king who could be seen, heard and, in practical affairs, felt. When we were in Japan, the Emperor paid a visit to Hiroshima. The joy of the Hiroshimans in having the Emperor in their midst knew no bounds. They did not connect him with their atomic misfortune. To the Japanese, the Emperor was the head and front, the spirit and essence of the nation, the symbol of two thousand and six hundred years of semi-mythical history. At a private dinner given to us by a Japanese friend, our hosts burst into a song which, they said, was two thousand years old and had now been banned by MacArthur: 'If I die for the Emperor at sea, the waves will wash my body ashore; if I die for the Emperor on land, flowers will grow over my grave; I have but one desire: to be by the side of my Emperor, alive or dead.' I felt certain that this song would continue to be sung long after General MacArthur and his decrees were forgotten.

18

KOREA

ON MY WAY back from Tokyo to Nanking I received a telegram from the Government of India instructing me to proceed to Seoul expeditiously as India's representative on the United Nations Commission on Korea. This turned out to be an interesting but depressing assignment. Interesting because we saw at close quarters the tension between the USA and the USSR, which was to be the chief source of anxiety in the post-war world. And depressing because with the best will in the world one felt powerless, in the presence of this tension, to advance the cause of Korea.

My only qualification for membership of the UN Commission on Korea was that I happened to be next door. I knew next to nothing about Korea, its history or its politics. All that I knew was that in relation to Korea, an Asian State had shown that it could be as ruthlessly imperialistic as any other. I got hold of a number of books and obtained as much information about Korea as I could within the time at my disposal.

I was fascinated by the history of Korea, which went back a thousand years before Christ. In 1112 B.C. one Ki-tze, a refugee from China, founded a dynasty known after him, and brought with him the polite manners and customs of China. The Ki-tze dynasty lasted till 116 B.C. and was followed by 'the Three Kingdoms', of which the most illustrious was the Silla dynasty, which survived the other two and ruled over a united Korea from A.D. 670 to 935. Then came the Koryu dynasty, when Buddhism flourished and Buddhist monasteries became the centres of learning and culture. In 1382 the Koryu government was overthrown by the Yi dynasty which, leaning culturally rather than politically on her great neighbour, China, lasted until the twentieth century. Thus, with no more than three dynastic changes in three thousand years of history, Korea had developed a civilization of her own. Indeed so sheltered was the growth of Korea, so immune was she from

external invasion and internal revolution, that in the nineteenth century she came to be known as 'the Hermit Kingdom'.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the world suddenly broke in. In 1876 Japan forced her to sign a trade treaty; and in 1882, the United States of America. There followed treaties with Germany, Russia, France and Great Britain. Alarmed by these developments, China attempted to strengthen her hold on Korea, but under the decadent Manchu regime was not in a position to do so. She merely provided Japan with a pretext for assuming the role of saviour of Korean independence. In 1895, after the Sino-Japanese war, Chinese suzerainty over Korea ceased to exist and Japan became her protector. The increase in Japanese influence in this region was noted with concern by Russia; and Russian counter-moves in Manchuria and elsewhere resulted in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, in which Japan again declared the independence of Korea as one of her principal objectives. In this war Russia was decisively defeated, and by the treaty of Portsmouth, which was brought about by the good offices of the President of the United States, Japan secured a political, military and economic stranglehold on Korea. Japan still paid lip-homage to Korean independence, but fortified by her alliance with Great Britain, then the world's greatest Power, she cast off all pretence in 1910 and annexed Korea. And thereafter she developed and exploited Korea to her heart's content.

The outbreak of the second world war seemed to open the way for the liberation of Korea. At the Cairo Conference, on 1 December 1943, China, the United Kingdom and the United States declared the right of Korea to independence. 'The aforesaid three Great Powers,' ran the declaration, 'mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.' The Soviet Union subsequently concurred in this declaration.

On the entry of the Soviet Union into the war it was agreed that it should take the surrender of the Japanese to the north of the 38th Parallel, and the United States of America, to the south. At that time the division of Korea seemed to be no

more than a minor military expedient. No one suspected that the 38th Parallel would harden into a frontier between the Soviet and American zones.

Attempts were repeatedly made by the United States of America and the Soviet Union to find a joint solution for the Korean problem. At the Moscow Conference, in December 1945, it was agreed that a joint United States-Soviet Commission should be created for the purpose of setting up a provisional Korean government which should negotiate a Four-Power Trusteeship, not to exceed five years, with China, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The very word 'trusteeship' was anathema to most Koreans; had not Japan herself entered Korea as a 'trustee' in 1905? The Soviet Union resented the anti-trusteeship campaign in South Korea which they attributed to American inspiration. The United States-Soviet Joint Commission met in 1946, argued, wrangled, suspended its meetings, and met again in 1947 and repeated the same processes. In September 1947 the United States, despairing of a direct agreement with the Soviet Union, brought the whole problem of Korean independence before the General Assembly of the United Nations. At the General Assembly, again, the Soviet Union and the United States took different stands. The Soviet Union asked that the troops, both their own and those of the United States, should be withdrawn by 1 January 1948, leaving the Koreans to work out their own destinies. The United States, on the other hand, insisted that the withdrawal of troops should be part of a general plan for the establishment of Korean independence under the supervision of the United Nations. This plan found favour with the General Assembly; and in order to carry it out the United Nations created a Commission, consisting of the representatives of Australia, Canada, China, El Salvador, France, India, the Philippines, Syria and Ukraine. Ukraine, however, refused to take part in the Commission.

We, the members of the Commission, had an unforgettable reception on our arrival in Seoul. It had been snowing, but the entire twelve-mile road from the airfield to the city was lined with cheering crowds, who had been waiting there in

the bitter cold for hours. They were waving Korean flags and shouting slogans of welcome. Many had come from villages, having trudged on foot, or journeyed 20 miles or more in buses, bullock-carts and horse-carts; and everywhere there were posters such as LONG LIVE THE UNITED NATIONS; WELCOME, UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON KOREA; and WORLD PEACE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT KOREAN FREEDOM.

Under the terms of the UN Commission we had been instructed 'to travel, observe and consult throughout Korea' and to see how elections could be held for the purpose of constituting a National Assembly and a National Government, which would take over the functions of government from the military commands and civilian authorities of North and South Korea. We seized every opportunity to demonstrate that our concern was with the whole of Korea and not with a part thereof, and made every effort to secure the co-operation of the authorities of North, as well as South, Korea. The Commission authorized me to pay a courtesy call on the Commanding Officer of the Soviet Forces in North Korea as well as on the Commanding Officer of the American Forces in South Korea. I sent a letter accordingly to both Commanding Officers. No reply was received from the Soviet General but Gromyko stated in the General Assembly that the attitude of the Soviet Government towards the UN Commission on Korea continued to be negative. The Commission thus had no means of exercising the functions conferred upon it by the General Assembly, in that part of Korea which was occupied by the forces of the USSR.

The Commission, however, decided to study the situation in South Korea. It was only too obvious that the people of Korea, who had been hankering after their independence, would not brook any further delay in its consummation. Few States represented in the United Nations could boast of so long and unbroken a period of independence as Korea had enjoyed. History showed that Korea could fight for its freedom. We recalled how, at the end of the sixteenth century, Korea defeated that forerunner of Japanese imperialism, Hideyoshi, and taught him—and the Japanese—a lesson which they did not forget for three centuries, for it was not until the

advent of the twentieth century that Japan again dared to attack Korea. Even during this dark period, the lamp of independence was not altogether extinguished. It continued to flicker in the hearts of men. It was carried by Korean leaders to lands far and near, and kept burning in such countries as China and the United States of America. Occasionally, as in 1919, the flame of independence burst into a conflagration. I was interested to note that at that time the light of non-violence, for upholding which Mahatma Gandhi lived and died, penetrated even to Korea. In the great rising of 1919, the demonstrators throughout Korea were advised:

> Whatever you do
> Do not insult the Japanese;
> Do not throw stones;
> Do not hit with your fists;
> For these are the acts of barbarians

—words reminiscent of Mahatma Gandhi's precepts.

If the Koreans were tenacious of independence, they were equally tenacious of their unity. Nothing was more remarkable than the homogeneity of the Korean nation. They belonged to the same race, spoke the same language and were proud of the same traditions. We were told by a distinguished Korean who appeared before us that until recently the terms 'North Korea' and 'South Korea' or 'North Korean' and 'South Korean' were simply unknown. Providence meant Korea to be one. The North could not live without the South, nor could the South without the North. The South was agricultural and the North was industrial; the South used to be the breadbasket of Asia, the North was a reservoir of power. The South grew paddy; the North had iron, coal, timber and hydro-electric power. Korea was thus indivisible, whether one looked at the problem from an economic, political or historical point of view. Deep down in the heart of every Korean, whether in the North or in the South, was this longing for unity. I shall never forget the applause which issued from 200,000 persons when, in the course of my address in the Seoul stadium on 15 January 1948, I referred to the need for preserving Korean unity and said, 'Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.'

When we visited Korea, the political life there was at once exciting and chaotic. There were no less than 400 parties, with little discernible distinctions of political principle. Between the leaders of the parties, who were comrades one day and rivals or opponents the next, there were bitter personal animosities. They also showed a remarkable propensity to slide from Right to Left or from Left to Right with singular agility.

The three great political leaders in Korea at that time were Syngman Rhee, Kim Koo and Kim Kui-sic. They were all in their seventies; and each had a unique record of service to the motherland. Between them, however, there was bitter personal antagonism which resulted, soon after my departure from Korea, in the assassination of Kim Koo. Kim Koo had performed some notable exploits in his youth. It was he who, with his bare hands, strangled Captain Tsuchida, the Japanese who murdered the last Queen of Korea. It was also he who hurled a bomb in a park in Shanghai in 1932, as a result of which the Japanese Commander-in-Chief lost his life, a Japanese Admiral an eye and a Japanese General a leg. Kim Kui-sic was of a different type. Scholarly, meditative and unfathomably erudite, he was neither a Rightist nor a Leftist but the leader of the middle-of-the-road group which valued Korean unity as much as Korean independence.

The most famous of the trinity was Syngman Rhee. His was a name which was worshipped by some and execrated by others in South Korea. By his age, his scholarship, his social charm, his friendship with President Wilson and his consistent and lifelong championship of Korean freedom, Rhee could have been the national leader of Korea in the sense in which Nehru was India's national leader. Nehru occupied, in every sense of the word, a central position in India's political life. Rhee, however, had been swung to the extreme Right by the sudden intrusion of the Right-Left tussle, of which the 38th Parallel was a 'sinister symbol. Gentle in appearance, but rigid in convictions, Rhee was, as Julius Caesar said of himself, 'constant as the northern star'. Caesarean, too, was his attitude to the American military authorities no less than to the Communists. He would give no quarter to the leftists, liberals, fellow-travellers

and other nincompoops. And in order to deal with them, he set up a Police State in South Korea, even as Kim Il-Sung had set up one in North Korea to deal with non-Communists. There was no habeas corpus in South Korea, and Japanese laws permitting arrests without warrant were still in force. In many respects we found that the Government of South Korea was as totalitarian as the Government of the North.

We appealed to the innate sense of unity, ingrained in the heart of every Korean, whether in the North or in the South. At one time this seemed to be having some effect even in North Korea. The Government of North Korea therefore began to abuse the Commission in choice language, as 'hirelings of the American dollar', 'puppets consisting of henchmen of American imperialists, bent on converting Korea into an American colony' and 'brokers who want to fatten the pocket of the United States of America, as well as their own, by selling under false pretences, the small nations of the world, including Korea'. Some South Korean leaders too did not fail to shower abuse on us, for different reasons. The fact is that Korea had been caught up in the play of forces beyond our power to control. In the clash of these cross-currents, swift, ideological, remorseless, one slice of Korea was carried away to the Left, and another to the Right. We tried to find some middle course where this frail bark, pieced together, could once more sail gracefully as she had done for centuries. But we failed.

Accompanied by Victor Hoo, the Secretary-General of the Commission, I flew to New York and submitted a report to the Interim Committee of the General Assembly. Our Commission was all but unanimous in thinking that a separate Government established in South Korea could not be called a National Government. It was therefore futile to hold elections in South Korea for setting up a National Government. Election for consultative purposes, however, might do some good. I appealed to the magnanimity of the Great Powers in the following words:

> If the Korean problem could be localized and solved in the light of one criterion and one only, namely, the good of the Korean people as a whole, not only would the United Nations earn the eternal gratitude of thirty million Koreans—a hermit

The chairman of the United Nations Commission on Korea submits his report in New York in 1948. On the author's left is Mr Trygve Lie and on his right the Commission's secretary-general, Dr Victor Hoo.

> nation which has been thrust into the play of international forces through no fault of its own—but the Great Powers themselves, on whom a solution would finally rest, would emerge out of this episode with enhanced prestige in the eyes of the world and in particular in the eyes of those great Asian States who are members of the Commission and who represent more than half the population of the world. It was only recently that three of those States attained independence. Mine was the last to do so, and it is my fervent hope, both as an Indian and as Chairman of the United Nations Commission, that this Committee may indicate a solution which will lead, at no distant date, to the emergence of another sovereign Asian Republic, Korea.

I coupled my appeal with a warning. If the unity of Korea was not restored, if two sovereign States were to come into existence in Korea, the two Governments might come into collision with unpredictable consequences. 'Korea may blow up,' I warned the United Nations, 'and that may be the beginning of a vast cataclysm in Asia and the world.' Two years later this dismal prophecy was almost fulfilled.

The first formal step towards the division of Korea was taken by the USA. Soon after I had submitted my report, it introduced a resolution leading to the establishment of a separate sovereign State in South Korea, calling itself the 'Republic of Korea'; and by way of instant reaction 'a People's Republic of Korea', claiming jurisdiction over the whole of Korea, sprang into existence in the North. The US Government brought considerable pressure to bear on the members of the UN, and its resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority, the only dissentients being Canada and Australia. At the time of voting, India suddenly changed her mind. She parted company with her two Commonwealth colleagues on the Commission and, falling in line with the United States, voted in favour of its resolution.

This volte-face on the part of India—and that in the presence of myself, who had deprecated the proposal for the establishment of a sovereign State in South Korea—led to much speculation. Some observers[1] even asserted that this meant that there was a

[1] Gordenker, *The U.N. and the Peaceful Unification of Korea.*

strong difference of opinion between the Government of India and myself on this issue and that that was the reason why I was soon transferred from the Commission. Actually, my appointment as Foreign Secretary had been settled much earlier.

The circumstances which led to India's voting were peculiar. Dr P. P. Pillai, our Permanent Representative to the UN, who had great experience of international organizations because he was the first Indian to have entered the Secretariat of the League of Nations, felt that the tide of opinion in the UN was running strongly in favour of the American resolution and that it would be futile, and even harmful, for India to row against it. Much as I respected Pillai's judgement, I was unconvinced by his argument; after all India had always taken pride in saying that she would put principle before expediency. But I did not protest. After submitting my report, I took no active part in the proceedings of the General Assembly. For this passivity, I must confess, there was a sentimental reason.

The Koreans were a very friendly people and we had made many friends among them. Dearest of them all was Marion Moh, a leading poetess of Korea, with whom I spent many a hallowed hour, talking not of politics—for on politics she and I agreed to differ—but on such elemental things as the sun and moon and stars, love and grief and joy. One day, tired of the interminable speeches at a ceremonial function, Victor Hoo and I slipped out of the meeting and went, without telling anyone, to Marion's house to spend the evening with her and Catherine Yim. At about midnight, there were frantic knocks at Marion's door downstairs. She went down to see what the matter was. There was K. G. Nair, my secretary, normally so unruffled, now flushed and angry, together with a number of policemen who had been searching for us for two hours. The Communists had been active, and the authorities thought that someone had kidnapped the Chairman and the Secretary-General of the United Nations Commission!

Marion was not only a poet but a patriot. Her attitude was quite simple. To her South Korea meant Korea; North Korea, like East Germany to Adenauer, was an aberration. In her eyes a vote in favour of the establishment of a sovereign republic in South Korea was a vote in favour of the indepen-

dence of her country, and a vote against it was a betrayal of her country. Marion had pinned all her hopes on me; she even addressed some poems to me as 'Saviour of Korea'! If, in these circumstances, my country had made itself conspicuous by voting against the resolution, she would have been heart-broken, and I would not have been able to face her on my return to Korea. So I let things take their course.

This was perhaps the only occasion in my service when I allowed my heart to prevail over my head. I console myself with the thought that my action—or inaction—has had no evil consequences. India quickly pulled herself together and, in spite of her vote in favour of the US resolution, refused to recognize the 'Republic of Korea' any more than the 'People's Republic of Korea' estahlished in the North, as she did not wish to do anything which would perpetuate the unnatural division of Korea. India lost no time in resuming her role as a link between the two blocs; and it was largely through her efforts that a three-year-war was ended and peace was secured in Korea in the middle of 1953. I shall therefore not regret:

> The awful daring of a moment's surrender
> Which an age of prudence can never retract.

To complete Marion's story, she had to pay heavily for her friendship with me. Soon after the North Koreans invaded South Korea, I, who was then in Delhi, received a message of greetings from her through Anup Singh, my successor on the UN Commission. She said that the message might be her last and a few days later I saw an announcement in the newspapers that Marion had been shot. This proved to be incorrect; a missionary woman was mistaken for Marion and shot dead. Marion had to leave Seoul and wandered about in disguise from village to village in order to escape the wrath of the Communists who had gained control over South Korea and had marked her out for destruction. In the course of those wanderings, when she had to go without food for days, she said she was forced to sell even something which she regarded as most precious, a wrist-watch which I had given her.

The agony of those weeks has turned her into a prematurely old, but not bitter, woman. She still retains her sweetness.

It was in Korea that I was fated to hear of the tragic death of Mahatma Gandhi. I shall never forget the sympathy of my Korean friends who shared the anguish of that insupportable hour and showed in many different ways that our loss was their own. Another Indian name which was remembered in Korea with respect and admiration was that of Rabindranath Tagore. Many knew by heart, and repeated to me, Tagore's message to Korea during his visit to the Far East.

> In the palmy days of Asia's greatness Korea was a lamp which sent forth its illumination over the entire East. May that lamp shine again with an undying light!

We members of the UN Commission on Korea did our best to kindle that lamp again, but the blasts of the cold war were too strong for us.

19

NEW DELHI AGAIN

ON MY RETURN to Nanking from Korea, I was appointed Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. During my absence in China mighty events had been happening in India. The North-West Frontier and Baluchistan, where I had spent some of the happiest years of my life, were now foreign territory. The Punjab, the 'land of the Five Rivers', had ceased to exist: three of the rivers were now in Pakistan and two remained in India. Bengal, too, was bisected. How the spirit of Lord Curzon would have gloated over that spectacle! In 1905 Lord Curzon carried out the partition of Bengal, which then included Bihar and Orissa, and was too large an area for efficient administration. But instead of cutting off Bihar and Orissa, Curzon cut off Eastern Bengal and joined it to Assam. The Bengalis considered this partition as an affront and started an agitation against it which attained all-India dimensions, and led to the partition being revoked six years later. The decision was announced by King George V himself at the first and last Durbar ever to have been held in India by a British sovereign. In 1947, Bengal was again divided into two, one half going to Pakistan and the other remaining in India.

The partition of India was accompanied by a vast migration of populations from Pakistan to India and vice versa and much blood was shed. The Hindus, forgetting the gospel of non-violence, and the Muslims, forgetting even their self-interest—for 40 million of their co-religionists still had to live side by side with Hindus in India—indulged in an orgy of murder. All this formed the price of India's independence. In September 1946, Britain transferred power irrevocably into Indian hands; in August 1947 India became a Dominion; and in January 1950 India was to become a Republic. India had shrunk in size but risen immeasurably in stature.

What happened in India in the latter part of 1947 was nothing short of a revolution. Yet my first impression on my return to India was that business was going on as usual. Despite the convulsions which it had undergone and the amputations which it had suffered, the body politic of India seemed to be functioning as before. The members of the Legislative Assembly continued to let off steam; the judges upheld the majesty of the law; and the ICS maintained law and order. In other words, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary went on working smoothly. For this the credit must go to the British Government which had established a first-class administrative structure in India. In 1947 the ICS was confronted by a difficult situation, when the lowest as well as the most sublime passions of man seemed to break out. But it rose to the occasion. This was the more remarkable because 'the steel frame of the Government', as Lloyd George called the ICS, which used to be predominantly British—as late as 1939 the service consisted of 759 Europeans and 540 Indians—was now almost exclusively Indian. All but a handful of the British members of the ICS had chosen to leave India at the time of partition, the vast majority of Muslim members left for Pakistan, and it was left to the remaining members of a truncated service to preserve the integrity of the administration, and of the country.

When the British left India, the unity even of divided India was in danger. Some 560 Princely States had been left in the air. It was open to them to adhere to India, to accede to Pakistan, or to remain independent. The story of Kashmir, where the ruler could not make up his mind, is well known. Equally notorious is the story of Hyderabad, where the Razakar movement dominated the Government for a time and even raised the slogan, '*Chalo Delhi*', 'On to Delhi!' Not so well-known are the antics of the State of Travancore which, under the Dewanship of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, declared itself independent, established diplomatic relations with Pakistan and even appointed an Ambassador of Travancore in Karachi. It almost looked as if India was going to be Balkanized. But this danger was averted by the firm handling of the Princes by a man of iron, who was then Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In this he was assisted by a

devoted band of kindred officials; one of them, V. P. Menon, has related this drama in undramatic, and therefore all the more impressive, language in his book, *The Integration of the Indian States*.

What distinguished the revolution in India from the revolution in China or in Russia was its serenity. Violence there was, but on a minor scale as compared with Russia and China, and it was quickly overcome. There was no attempt to overthrow the social system or to uproot the administrative structure. Yet a new spirit was in the air. It infected even Viceregal Lodge. Lord Mountbatten, the last of the British Governors-General of India, was a new type. It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than between him and Lord Linlithgow, who had been Viceroy and Governor-General of India from 1936 to 1943. With his unwieldy frame, triple chin and ponderous dignity, Lord Linlithgow was the personification of an expiring imperialism which had outlived whatever purpose it might have had in the past. When Linlithgow left Delhi for good in 1943, Weightman, who was then acting as Foreign Secretary, wrote a letter to me saying that not even a chaprasi was at the airfield to see him off. Surely, said Weightman, a man who had been Viceroy of India for seven long and troubled years deserved something better.

Few Indians, however, regretted Lord Linlithgow's departure. No Viceroy ever came to India better acquainted with its problems; he had been Chairman of a Royal Commission on Agriculture as well as a Royal Commission on Labour. No Viceroy was more hard-working; none, with the possible exception of Lord Curzon, wrote a larger number of notes and drafts. Yet no Viceroy did less to advance India towards self-government or even good government. The time had come when good government was not only no substitute for self-government, but could not be had without the latter. That was why Linlithgow left India in administrative as well as political chaos. For the political chaos it is perhaps not fair to lay the whole blame on Linlithgow, for he had to serve an imperious master, who felt, and said, that he had not been called upon to become first Minister of the Crown to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. But for the

administrative debacle Linlithgow was directly responsible. His ineptitude was seen at its worst in his handling of the famine of Bengal, a man-made famine, in which some three million men died. The moment Lord Wavell assumed the Viceroyalty, things began to change. The famine was brought under control—the Army was put on to tackle it—and the first steps were taken to break the political deadlock. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders of the Congress were released. Lord Wavell was followed by Lord Mountbatten, a younger and more dynamic person. Assisted by an even more dynamic wife, Mountbatten prevailed upon the British Government to advance the date of India's independence by a few crucial months—crucial, because during those months reactionary elements in the Princely States and elsewhere might have gathered strength and support and done much mischief. In August 1947, Lord Mountbatten, the last of the British Viceroys of India, became the first Governor-General of the Dominion of India; in less than a year, an Indian Governor-General took his place; and in less than three years India became a Republic. But the transition was so smooth that the ship of state did not feel even a tremor. That was partly because it had a well-tried, though depleted, crew and chiefly because it now had a famous navigator, Jawaharlal Nehru.

It was, however, one thing to steer the ship of state into the waters of independence; another, to sail on them. The world wondered how Jawaharlal Nehru, the erstwhile agitator, would look in the garb of a constructive statesman. Caroe told me in 1945 that Bajpai, the Agent-General for India in the USA, had coined a piquant phrase about Nehru. He had called him 'the Hamlet of Indian politics'; and the Government of India encouraged him to present Nehru to the American public in that light as a high-minded but ineffective figure. How far would this high-minded man be effective in tackling the manifold problems of 350 million people?

The spectacle of Jawaharlal Nehru riding the waves of independence was too exciting for any country to miss. Therefore, a new tribe flocked into Delhi, the tribe of diplomats.

They came from all parts of the globe, from all the five continents, from countries great and small, stretching from China to Chile and Sweden to Siam. They had not been seen in India for centuries. Not that India had never known them. In Bhavabhuti's *Malati-Madhav*, written eight centuries ago, there is an admirable description of a diplomat: 'He is a true diplomat who, behaving and conducting himself outwardly in the most pleasing and charming manner, can seal inwardly even the minutest aperture of escape for others very firmly, and thus he accomplishes all his aims and acts of policy by remaining seemingly indifferent and neutral to them, and keeping his mouth shut.'

Since Bhavabhuti's days, diplomatic etiquette has developed a great deal and has been codified. When India became independent and diplomats started flocking to Delhi, we had somewhat hazy notions of the treatment to be accorded, and the courtesies to be extended, to them. I remember how one morning the Counsellor of the Turkish Embassy in New Delhi called on me and complained bitterly that his Ambassador had been insulted. The previous evening Jawaharlal Nehru had invited the newly arrived Turkish Ambassador and the Swedish Minister and his wife to dinner. Mrs Jarring, the Swedish Minister's wife, was seated to the Prime Minister's right; and the Swedish Minister and the Turkish Ambassador to the right and left respectively of the hostess, Indira Gandhi. The person who arranged the dinner thought that it would not do to seat the Swedish Minister opposite his wife. The Turkish Counsellor observed that to have given precedence to the Swedish Minister over the Turkish Ambassador was a deliberate affront to Turkey and that if this had happened in any country other than India, for which Turkey had the highest regard, his Ambassador would have walked out of the dining-room. I brought this matter to the notice of the Prime Minister. He wrote a charming letter to the Turkish Ambassador in which, among other things, he said, 'Most of us have had nothing to do with protocol and orders of precedence in all our past lives, a good part of which was spent in prison' ; and he asked him to accept the assurance that no discourtesy was intended.

The question of the extent to which an Ambassador is entitled to diplomatic immunity once arose in an acute form. An Ambassador, accredited to a certain country, arrived in India on his way home with half-a-dozen suspiciously heavy packages. They were found to contain gold, worth Rs. 15 lakhs. The smuggling of gold into India is a serious offence; and there was no alternative but to confiscate the gold and put the Ambassador in court. We held the view that diplomatic immunity did not extend to such matters, especially in the case of diplomats in transit. The Ambassador concerned was dismissed from service by his Government; and on a personal appeal from the Head of his State to our President, it was agreed that he should be allowed to leave India without undergoing the sentence, provided he made a clean breast of it in court and thus facilitated the conviction of his co-accused.

Sometimes we had to deal with less serious, but more piquant, situations. The Head of a Mission informed me that the secret agents of a certain Power had been after him; and we gave him special police protection. One evening the Chief of Protocol received a frantic telephone call to the effect that the Ambassador had been poisoned. On investigation it turned out to be a simple case of diarrhoea! Another strange complaint made to the Foreign Office was that someone had entered the room of the attractive wife of the Counsellor of a certain Embassy, opened her wardrobe and torn her underwear to shreds. That case, too, was duly investigated; and it was found that it was nothing more than an act of frantic revenge on the part of an admirer who had been rebuffed by the owner of the underwear. Such incidents showed that diplomats and their wives,

> For a' that, and a' that,
> Their tinsel show, and a' that

were after all human.

It gave me much amusement to see how some women of the diplomatic corps used to hover round the Prime Minister. One in particular would never leave him in peace. In any party she would track him down and hold him to her in idle or exalted conversation, leaving the other diplomatic wives to look

on in annoyance or exasperation. The Prime Minister was too chivalrous to leave her abruptly, and when he at last managed to tear himself away she would follow his retreating steps with liquid eyes, infinitely sad that he would now have to talk to some less interesting woman.

The Soviet Union as well as the Western Powers had their representatives in New Delhi. They were always on the look-out for the slightest indication of India leaning more to one side or the other. From the outset Nehru had made it clear that India would not align herself with either bloc. In his very first broadcast as Foreign Minister, on 7 September 1946, only six days after he had formed the interim National Government, Nehru said:

> We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale . . . The world, in spite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer cooperation and the building up of a world commonwealth. It is for this One World that free India will work . . . . We send our greetings to the people of the United States of America to whom destiny has given a major role in international affairs. . . . To that other great nation of the modern world, the Soviet Union, which also carries a vast responsibility for shaping world events, we send greeting.

Nehru knew that it would not be easy for India to remain aloof from all Power groupings and that the result of her trying to do so might well be that she would incur the suspicion and even resentment of both sides. Our early experience amply confirmed this fear. For the first six or seven years, the Soviet Government regarded India as a State which was nominally independent but really subservient to the West, especially in the economic sphere. They received the appointment of Mrs Pandit as Ambassador in Moscow with great satisfaction; she had led the Indian delegation to the United Nations in 1946 and had the prestige of being the Prime Minister's sister; yet she made no headway in the Soviet Union. Her successor, Dr

Radhakrishan, was better liked and had the rare distinction of being received by Stalin. Nevertheless, India and the Soviet Union behaved towards each other like two embarrassed acquaintances who had to be polite and could not be friendly. There were hardly any cultural exchanges, nor was there any trade except an occasional barter deal.

If the attitude of the Soviet Union towards India was lukewarm, the emotions of the USA towards India oscillated between love and dislike. When there was a hope that India might be an ally on the side of the USA in her global crusade against Communism, the USA was all smiles; when this hope was frustrated, her love curdled into disgust. It was strange that the USA, which for a hundred years had kept clear of all 'entangling alliances', should have been unable to appreciate India's policy of non-alignment.

President Eisenhower had an instinctive understanding of India's policy. Once he declared that after all neutrality, as conceived by the newly independent countries, did not mean neutrality as between right and wrong and that it need not work against the interests of the USA. This caused a flutter in the diplomatic dovecotes of Karachi, Teheran and other capitals of America's allies; and the next day John Foster Dulles contradicted his chief by pronouncing that neutralism was 'short-sighted and immoral'. However, the USA has, under the sagacious leadership of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, travelled a long way from this posture.

The war in Korea proved to be an acid test of India's foreign policy. War broke out in 1950. India agreed with the findings of the UN Commission that it was the North Korean troops who invaded South Korea and supported a resolution in the General Assembly, declaring North Korea as the aggressor. 'This is the day I have been waiting for,' said Loy Henderson, the US Ambassador to India, to Bajpai. Henderson took India's vote to mean that in the grand contest between Communism and anti-Communism, between the USSR and the USA, India had swung over to the side of the latter. But that was too facile an interpretation of India's vote. From the outset, India's effort was to find a political,

and not a military, settlement for the Korean problem. At first the North Korean troops swept right through South Korea, and it looked as if the whole of Korea would fall to them. Then came MacArthur's brilliant landing in Inchon, as a result of which South Korea was cleared of the invaders. That was the proper moment to cry a halt to military operations and to attempt a settlement, and India urged that this should be done. But, intoxicated by victory, MacArthur went beyond the mandate of the United Nations, which merely authorized military operations to expel the invaders from South Korea, and threatened to cross the 38th Parallel into North Korea. China then made it clear that if this happened she would have no alternative but to intervene. One day Chou En-lai woke up Panikkar, our Ambassador in Peking, at midnight and solemnly informed him of this decision. India, which was almost the only effective link between China and the West, transmitted this warning in all seriousness to Great Britain and the USA, but the Western Powers, especially the USA, were in no mood to listen. They thought that China was bluffing. Would she be so foolhardy as to challenge the UN and the 15 Powers, headed by the USA, which had been fighting in Korea? And so MacArthur went ahead with his plans to subjugate North Korea. At first, all went well; his troops reached the Yalu river, the boundary between Korea and China. 'Home by Christmas, boys,' said MacArthur to his victorious troops. Then came a great Chinese offensive which pushed MacArthur's troops to the south of the 38th Parallel, causing fearful casualties. There was a howl of indignation in the USA and it was feared that America might even use the atom bomb. At that time, a conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers was in progress; and India, supported by Canada, urged that an attempt be made to effect a settlement on certain terms, to which India obtained China's consent. But the USA was more keen on getting the UN to brand China as an aggressor than on bringing the hostilities to an end. In this she succeeded, with the result that the war went on for another two years and a possible opportunity for reducing tension in the Far East was lost.

In respect of China and Korea, India was in a position to pursue a policy untrammelled by any previous commitments. Towards Tibet, however, the position was somewhat different. The British Government of India had undertaken to support the independence of Tibet, subject to the suzerainty of China. Independent India had, in a sense, inherited this commitment. Circumstances, however, had radically changed. As long as China was weak—and ever since the Revolution of 1911 she had been in the throes of a civil war—it was easy for Tibet to assert its independence and for India to support it; but now, for the first time in centuries, a strong government had come into existence in China. There was therefore a physical limit to what the Government of India could do to support the independence of Tibet against China. When China invaded Tibet in 1950, the most India could do was to protest against the use of force and to insist that the autonomy of Tibet should be respected.

In dealing with the crisis in Tibet, the Government of India had not only to take into account the practical possibilities of the situation, but the long-range results of any policy which they might adopt. For the first time in recent history, an independent India was face to face with an independent China; and it was important for both countries that they should not start their relations on the wrong foot. Fortunately, memories of a couple of thousand years of friendship lay behind them and were still green. This friendship had been interrupted by the advent of the British in India and the domination of China by a number of foreign Powers. If India was a colony, said Dr Sun Yat-sen, China was a hyper-colony, a colony of all nations. Now both countries had thrown off the foreign yoke and were free to resume their ancient friendship. For these two great neighbours to embark on their new journey with mutual suspicion and distrust would have been to bequeath to future generations a legacy of ill-will, like that which arose and persisted between the two neighbours, France and Germany, and which vitiated the history of Europe for centuries. We decided to handle the Tibetan problem in this context, but subsequent events have raised doubts regarding our wisdom.

Nearer home, Nepal was in a ferment. Once India became independent, Nepal too was bound to feel the breath of freedom. For more than a century, Nepal had been governed by the family of the Ranas, the hereditary Prime Ministers who had succeeded in reducing the king to a nonentity and amassing all power and most of the wealth of Nepal in their own hands. Naturally there was popular agitation against this state of affairs; and the king, chafing under the domination of the Ranas, put himself at its head. One morning I received a telephone message from C. P. N. Singh, our Ambassador in Kathmandu, announcing that the king, accompanied by his family, had come to the Embassy and sought asylum. We decided to give him asylum, in our Embassy to start with, and later in India. Exasperated, and in a desperate effort at continuing their rule, the Ranas deposed the king and appointed his grandson, an infant-in-arms, as his successor. This would have ensured the continuance of the Ranas in power for at least a quarter of a century. The British Government was at first inclined to recognize the infant king, but thought better of it when they found that India was adamantly against it. Thus the domination of the Ranas was broken, and the people of Nepal began to enjoy democracy, little suspecting that they would soon have to endure a dose of royal, instead of Rana, autocracy, passed off as 'basic democracy'.

It is not the object of this chapter to give even a summary of the many problems which the Foreign Office had to deal with during the period when I was Foreign Secretary. A Foreign Office is essentially a custodian of precedents. We had no precedents to fall back upon, because India had no foreign policy of her own until she became independent. We did not even have a section for historical research until I created one, with a brilliant man, Dr Zachariah, at its head. Our foreign policy therefore necessarily rested on the intuition of one man, who was Foreign Minister as well as Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Fortunately, his intuition was based on knowledge—knowledge which he had gained by a close study of international problems and meditation thereon during long years of enforced inactivity in jail. And his knowledge was

tempered with wisdom—wisdom which he had gained by sitting, not meekly and unquestioningly but alertly, intelligently and often critically, at the feet of his master, Mahatma Gandhi.

If India had no precedents of her own to guide her in the international arena, she at least had a tradition, of which Mahatma Gandhi was the embodiment. That was the grand tradition of non-violence. Not that India had always been faithful to it, but it had come down from Gautama Buddha, who lived 2,500 years ago, like a silver stream, often sullied yet always resuming its pristine purity. Mahatma Gandhi had converted this mountain stream into a majestic river, which burst its philosophic banks, fertilized Indian politics and permeated the minds of millions. It was essentially through non-violence that India attained independence; and the question of questions in independent India was how far the principle of non-violence could be applied to the practical problems of international life. Could non-violence, which was the key to Indian freedom, also become the key to world peace?

Pakistan's invasion of Kashmir showed at once that there were limitations to the efficacy of non-violence. A horde of Frontier tribesmen, aided and abetted by the Government of Pakistan, entered the smiling valley of Kashmir, rioting and raping, marauding and murdering, and were on their blood-stained way to Srinagar. When the Maharaja, who had been sitting on the fence, acceded to India and sought the assistance of the Government of India to repel the invasion, the Government of India came to the conclusion that the only way of saving Srinagar was to transport Indian troops by air to Kashmir, meet the invaders and break them. Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, was still alive. In the agonizing dilemma with which he was faced, Nehru went to Mahatma Gandhi and explained the situation and the action which the Government proposed to take; and Gandhiji gave his approval. But as soon as the rioters were expelled from the valley of Srinagar, the Government of India put a stop to the fighting and took the matter to the United Nations.

The Kashmir incident showed that situations might arise when force had to be met with force. Some of Gandhiji's own followers were not averse to the use of force when necessity

arose. Sardar Patel was one of the staunchest of Gandhiji's followers and the strongest of Nehru's colleagues. At a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet, of which Sardar Patel was a member, the war in Korea was under discussion. We had just received a dispatch from K. K. Chettur, our Ambassador in Tokyo, describing vividly the horrors of war in Korea and the havoc caused by indiscriminate bombing. Nehru read out this dispatch with visible emotion and indignation. When he had finished, Sardar Patel quietly asked, 'Who has written that letter? Is he a Jain?'

A foreign reader might find it difficult to appreciate the significance of this remark. Mahavir Jain, a contemporary of Buddha, was the founder of Jainism, which exalted non-violence beyond all other virtues. Indeed, in the hands of his followers, the practice of non-violence assumed an almost bizarre character. The Jains would have their last meal before sunset lest they should swallow some insect with their food after darkness had set in, nor would they kill even harmful creatures like flies and mosquitoes. I still remember the look of horror on the face of Sir Bhagchand Soni, the Jain leader, with whom I stayed in Ajmer, when I killed a fly which had been sitting on the sweets placed before me.

On another occasion, in 1950, the problem of Goa was being discussed in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet. Various proposals were put forward for bringing economic pressure to bear on the Portuguese Government of Goa. The feasibility of those measures and their probable effects were examined in great detail. Rajaji[1] opposed the application of those measures. He observed that after all the Goans were our brethren and that we should not do anything which would cause them hardship. Rajaji's solution was that we should conquer Goa by love. The discussion went on for two hours. Sardar Patel seemed to take no interest. He kept his eyes closed for most of the time and seemed half-asleep. Suddenly, he woke up and said, 'Shall we go in? It is two hours' work!' Nehru resisted this suggestion vehemently, saying that if we, who professed to believe in non-violence, were to use violence to absorb Goa, we would be setting a bad

[1] C. Rajagopalachari, Governor-General, 1948-50.

example. Moreover, there would be international complications. After all, India's patience had paid in respect of the French Settlements in India; and Goa too was bound to come to India. Sardar Patel did not press his point, but retired sphinx-like into silence. He is said to have remarked to a friend that Jawaharlal Nehru was proving himself to be not merely the political heir of Mahatma Gandhi but a lineal descendant of Gautama Buddha.

Nehru, however, was a politician and not a prophet. In 1962 he was constrained to depart from the path of non-violence and integrate Goa into India by a slight application of force. It turned out to be little more than two hours' work, as Sardar Patel had predicted.

A good deal of my time as Foreign Secretary was taken up with the organization of the Foreign Service. We did not start with any *a priori* notions. The Prime Minister had not even made up his mind whether ours should be a career service, as in the United Kingdom, or whether heads of missions should be normally recruited from amongst public men, as in the USA. At first, Nehru seemed inclined to follow the American model, but in one or two cases he burned his fingers and came to the conclusion that, on the whole, the British system was safer and better suited for India.

We began by enlisting some three dozen officers of the ICS into the Foreign Service. They were picked men and formed the kernel of the service. We could have picked more, but we felt that the internal needs of India were greater than the external. Apart from Bajpai and myself, there were only two who had had any foreign experience: H. S. Malik, who was our Consul-General in New York in the British days and subsequently became our Ambassador to France, and P. A. Menon, now our Ambassador in Bonn, who was Secretary to the Agent-General in Washington.

From the outset we decided that the normal method of recruitment to the Foreign Service should be through open competitive examination. To start with, however, we had to select a certain number of over-aged candidates. We drew them partly from amongst the officers of the Indian Army,

Navy and Air Force and partly from other professions. On the whole, the officers of the armed forces have proved to be a great asset to the Foreign Service.

As Foreign Secretary, I tried to establish personal relations with every member of the Service with whom I came into contact. On the eve of my departure from New Delhi, I wrote a letter to every member of the Foreign Service giving him, Polonius-like, some advice as to how he should conduct himself. I reminded them that, of all the virtues which Harold Nicolson has enumerated in his book *Diplomacy*, the first and foremost is integrity—integrity in thought, word and deed. I warned them in particular against certain failings, such as the tendency to talk in season and out of season. We Indians, I have often thought, are a nation of talkers. Representatives of foreign governments and the foreign press, stationed in India, find it only too easy to gain information even about secret matters, because we are inclined to hold forth about such matters even in the presence of foreigners. Quite often we do so without any intention of making mischief; we may only be prompted by a little vanity, a desire to show that we are in the know of things. Yet the consequences of such unguarded talk may sometimes be disastrous. Once Nehru, exasperated by the tendency on the part of some of our diplomats to talk too much, roundly said in Parliament that it is the business of a diplomat to keep his ears open and his mouth shut.

Another failing against which I warned my young friends was pomposity. This may almost be called an occupational hazard among diplomats. The very designation, Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, is mouth-filling and head-swelling. An Ambassador enjoys various immunities and privileges denied to ordinary mortals, and is likely to be pampered by the Government and people of the country to which he is accredited. Even a modest individual, therefore, is apt to regard himself as a VIP and to put on airs. I often think of an old lady in Novgorod in the Soviet Union who, seeing me, asked my interpreter, Valia, who I was. 'Oh,' said Valia, hoping that the woman would be suitably impressed, 'His Excellency is the Ambassador of India to the Soviet Union.'

'Yes, yes,' said the old woman impatiently, 'I know he is Ambassador, but what does he do?' A question which, for the good of my soul, I have often asked myself.

In the year in which I relinquished my appointment as Foreign Secretary, my son, Shankaran, passed brilliantly into it. Eleven years have passed since then. I have retired from service and he is slowly ascending the diplomatic ladder and has become First Secretary in our High Commission in London. I was happy to receive from the High Commissioner, Chagla, a letter describing him as 'a chip of the old block and, saving your grace, a chip which will surpass the old block itself'. And in this he will be assisted by Lalitha, one of the most accomplished girls of her generation. This family tradition is also being maintained by my daughters, Kunja, wife of Thampi, a member of the UN Secretariat, who is earning a name for herself as a writer of children's books, and by Malini, wife of P. N. Menon, our Consul-General in San Francisco, who is taking more and more after her mother and admirably combining her worldly duties with her interest in spiritual matters. And now the tradition will be continued by my grand-daughter, Bharati, a blushing bride, who has proceeded with her husband, Gopinath, to their first station, Geneva.

20

MOSCOW

BY THE MIDDLE of 1952 I had done more than four years as Foreign Secretary and had had enough of it. My health began to break down. My old spinal trouble was getting worse, and long hours in an office chair did it no good. Moreover, we were unable to make both ends meet. We kept open house in Delhi. Our twin boys were in Europe and our twin girls had just got married, one to Govindan Nair, a rising lawyer who soon became one of the youngest judges of the High Court in India, and the other to P. N. Menon, a promising officer of the Foreign Service. All this meant heavy expenditure, and our bank account was seriously overdrawn. We sold our estate at Vidura for a lakh of rupees, and the proceeds barely sufficed to clear off our overdraft.

One day, in June 1952, Bajpai told me that he was thinking of suggesting my name to the Prime Minister as Ambassador to France. He thought that he was doing me a favour. 'No, not Paris,' I told him. 'Paris is the last place I should like to go to. The French are so conscious of their cultural superiority that they would look down on anyone who could not speak French fluently.' 'Well,' said Bajpai glumly, 'the only other post vacant is Moscow.' 'I do not mind going to Moscow,' I said. Bajpai could hardly conceal his surprise; it was as though I had offered to go to the Andamans!

Bajpai must have reported this talk to the Prime Minister. A day or two later, Nehru came into my room and told me, in the most casual manner, that he was thinking of posting me to Moscow. I told him that I would be happy to go there.

We left Delhi for Moscow on 8 September 1952. A large number of our friends were at the station to see us off. I was particularly happy to see Indira Gandhi there. I had always been one of her silent admirers, and she must have instinctively felt the depth of my affection. When the train was on the point of leaving, she said, 'Don't be surprised if I descend on you in

Moscow.' She was as good as her word; and it was in her company that we did our first long tour of the Soviet Union and saw Tbilisi, Sochi and Tashkent.

At the railway station, one person was conspicuous by his absence. K. V. Novikov, the Soviet Ambassador to India, and I had been good friends; and yet he did not deem it necessary to see the Ambassador-designate off to his own country. This showed how lukewarm were the relations between India and the Soviet Union at that time.

We travelled from London to Leningrad on a Soviet ship, the *Belostrov*. After having travelled *de luxe* on the *Corfu*, a P & O ship, from Bombay to London, we found the *Belostrov* somewhat sombre. The ship itself was a beauty; it had been built in Finland to Soviet specifications and given by the Finns to the Soviet Government towards reparations; but the food was peculiar and the service poor. I was astonished when caviare was served for our first day's breakfast. I am fond of caviare, but regard it as a luxury, to be eaten with vodka in the company of select friends at an elegant dinner. I could not possibly stomach it for breakfast, and was still addicted to the British tradition of bacon and eggs. On the *Corfu* there was a smart, well-dressed waiter in attendance on every 4 or 5 passengers; on the *Belostrov*, one middle-aged woman had to look after some 50 people in the dining-room. I at once admired her and pitied her for the way in which, with a set face, she looked after so many passengers. That was the first time I realized the significance of the word *rabota* (work), which no citizen of the USSR can escape. 'He who does not work,' says the Constitution of the USSR, 'neither shall he eat.'

We had a rough voyage through the Baltic Sea, even more rough than it had been in the Bay of Biscay. Both Anujee and I were sick and exhausted. One morning, at about 10.30, we rang the bell and asked for a cup of tea. 'The kitchen is closed till 1 p.m.,' replied the steward. 'May we have a little hot water?' we asked. 'The kitchen is closed till 1 p.m.,' he repeated, and walked out. Very different was our

voyage back from Leningrad to London on the completion of my term in Moscow in 1961, when the Khrushchev era was in full swing. There were a number of smartly dressed waitresses and the attention given to the passengers could easily compare with that in the P & O.

Among the passengers on the *Belostrov* were Mrs Grey, the wife of the British Minister in Moscow, two Englishwomen who were going to Moscow to take part in a chess tournament, a number of perpetually chattering Russian women who were returning home after having been overseas for a number of years, and a dozen pious New Zealanders who were going as a Peace Delegation to Moscow. On arrival at Leningrad the New Zealanders were presented with flowers and felt quite pleased with themselves. But when the Customs officials insisted on opening their boxes and examining every article they lost their tempers and flung the flowers away, saying that this was not the way to treat guests.

Prakash Kaul, Second Secretary and a good Russian student, met me at Leningrad, and though we were to spend only three or four hours there before catching the train to Moscow he took us to the most expensive suite in the Astoria and ordered a most expensive dinner. Whether he did so to impress the Russians with the dignity of the Ambassador of India, or to impress the Ambassador with the cost of living in Russia, on the basis of which he was to press for an increase in foreign allowance, I do not know. Leaving Leningrad at about 10 at night by the Red Arrow, we reached Moscow the next morning.

Our first impression was far from pleasant. It was not yet the middle of October, but winter had already come. The trees had shed their leaves and the streets were wet and slushy. Gundevia, Minister-Counsellor, and his charming wife had done their best to make the Embassy cheerful, but I had hardly ever been in a more depressing house. It had no garden and no view; it had only two bathrooms, and a guest had to go through my dressing-room to reach his bathroom. The bedroom was so long, ornate and dismal that I felt we were lying in state, and it had a cavernous cupboard in which—so Gundevia told me—Morozov, the Russian millionaire who

built this house, used to hide his mistresses from his wife. How my predecessor, Dr Radhakrishnan, put up with this house for two years, I do not know. But he was a philosopher; and when he was translating the *Upanishads*—his principal occupation in Moscow—the world did not exist for him.

The prevailing atmosphere was not calculated to dispel the gloom which our house had generated in me. Indeed, it aggravated our sense of claustrophobia. In 1952 diplomats were practically confined to Moscow. They could not travel outside a radius of 30 kilometres, and even within this area could only travel on three main roads. One could visit Tbilisi, Leningrad and Stalingrad with special permission, but no other town or Republic. Day after day, the *Pravda* and *Izvestia* dilated on the phenomenal progress which the USSR, and especially its outlying regions, had attained, but not being able to see it with their own eyes, diplomats took it all with more than the proverbial pinch of salt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, our first Ambassador, had expressed a keen desire to visit the Central Asian Republics. No reply was vouchsafed to her for a long time and eventually she was told that the hotel accommodation in Central Asia was not sufficiently good for Her distinguished Excellency. And yet, within a few weeks, when two Indian communists, the Jambekars, visited the Soviet Union, a special plane was put at their disposal and they were able to go wherever they wanted.

Socially, there was hardly any contact between Russians and foreigners. No Russian ever asked a diplomat to his house, nor did he ever condescend to go to a diplomat's house. When, on the day on which I presented credentials, Kulazhenkov, the Chief of Protocol, accepted our invitation to lunch with us, Gundevia thought that it was such an unusual gesture of friendship that it was worth reporting to the Government of India. Gascoigne, the British Ambassador, told me how his wife, in the kindness of her heart, wanted to invite the children of the Foreign Office officials for a Christmas party. This desire was intimated to the Foreign Office. Gromyko summoned Gascoigne and told him that he could not take upon himself the responsibility of advising his Government to permit Russian children to go to a British home.

Novikov was now the Head of the Department dealing with India in the Foreign Office. I drew his attention to the disparaging remarks about Mahatma Gandhi in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*. There Gandhiji was described as 'a reactionary who hails from the Bania caste . . . betrayed the people and helped the imperialists against them . . . aped the ascetics . . . pretended in a demagogic way to be a supporter of Indian independence and an enemy of the British . . . and widely exploited religious prejudices'. I had hoped that Novikov, having been in India for five years, would show some appreciation of the sentiments of our people, but I found him cold and unsympathetic. He said that for every one uncomplimentary remark about Gandhi in Soviet books and newspapers, he could point out a hundred uncomplimentary remarks about Lenin and Stalin in India. I pointed out the obvious difference: the Government of India normally exercised no control over books and journals, whereas all Soviet publications either emanated from the Soviet Government or were ancillary to its policy. Novikov replied that in the USSR too, scholars carried on research from their own point of view and came to their own conclusions regarding historical personages like Gandhi, and that they were not amenable to government control—a proposition which I ventured to doubt. However I thought it useless to continue the argument. All one could do was to wait in patience for the day when the Soviet Government, of its own accord, would revise its verdict on our leaders like Gandhiji and Nehru. And that day came sooner than I expected.

Stalin, with whom I had had an interview only a fortnight previously, died on the 5th of March 1953. His death proved to be the end of an era. In my book *The Flying Troika* I have given an account of the more important events of the succeeding decade—the liquidation of Beria which turned out to be the last purge in the Stalinist style; the denigration of Stalin; and the historic XXth Congress which modified some of the basic principles of Marxism so as to bring them into accord with the realities of the nuclear age. I have described its repercussions, on the one hand on Poland where there was a

revolt, and on Hungary which staged a revolution, and on the other hand on China, which eventually made herself the leader of the counter-revolution, even as Ignatius Loyola made himself the leader of the counter-reformation in Europe and claimed the right to be the true interpreter of the faith and exterminator of heretics. I have indicated the effects of the XXth Congress and its aftermath on the fortunes of Khrushchev who, ousting the diehards of the Party, eventually emerged as the true leader of the country. I have also described the vicissitudes in the relations between the East and the West, and in particular between the USA and the USSR, culminating in Khrushchev's visit to the USA in 1960. Alas, this was followed by the U2 incident and a consequent deterioration in the relations between the two great Powers. Relations, however, began to improve again with Kennedy's election as President.

In this book I shall not attempt to describe these dramatic developments. I shall merely glance at them in so far as they affected our own life and work in the Soviet Union and our attitude towards the cold war.

On Stalin's death there was an almost magical change in the atmosphere of the Soviet Union. I cannot describe it better than I have done in *The Flying Troika*: 'It was as if a fortochka had been suddenly opened into a stuffy and rather suffocating room. During the three succeeding years, a number of windows were opened, too. In the autumn of 1956 there arose a storm which shook the edifice of communism and almost blew off one of its outhouses, Hungary. Thereupon, the windows were closed, though not so hermetically as before; but the fortochka was kept open. Some persons, like Mr Molotov, Mr Malenkov and Mr Kaganovich who could not bear even a carefully regulated draught and strongly objected to it, were obliged to leave the Soviet Union or to remove themselves to remote spots. Mr Khrushchev, on the other hand, believed in fresh air; occasionally he even enjoyed a vigorous stroll in the wide, open spaces of the world. He too, however, was anxious that the play of international currents should not waft any poisonous germs into the Soviet Union and infect his people. Sometimes he was troubled by

the East Wind, sometimes by the West Wind; and he kept a wary eye on both.'

Soviet policy has had its ups and downs and, on more than one occasion, Khrushchev had to put the troika in reverse, but generally speaking it has continued to move forward to a relaxation of tensions, internal and external. Diplomats were the first to benefit. No longer were we confined within a radius of 30 km. from Moscow. No longer were the beautiful Black Sea coast, the oil-rich Caspian, the much-advertised Central Asian Republics and the once-dreaded Siberia closed to us. I myself travelled from Murmansk on the Arctic coast to the Crimea in the south and from Minsk in the west to Lake Baikal and Alma Ata in the east and have described these journeys in my book *Russian Panorama*. Conditions of travel, too, became pleasanter. In Stalin's time one had to carry one's own flask of water and one's own toilet-paper wherever one travelled. Now, not only were these amenities supplied but even hostesses began to appear on the principal flights. The Soviet Union was the first country in the world to use jet planes extensively for commercial travel. This has made a great difference. The flight to Tashkent, for instance, now takes 3 hours; it took Indira Gandhi and myself 13 hours when we did it in 1953. Even Delhi has been brought within 6 hours' flying distance of Moscow and a biweekly service between India and the USSR via Tashkent was inaugurated on 15 August 1958. When I arrived in Moscow, not a single foreign airline was allowed to fly in. By 1958 a number of foreign airlines such as the SAS, Air France, KLM, Sabena, Finair, BEA and the AII began to fly to Moscow; and vice versa. At a dinner which we gave in honour of the inauguration of the direct air service between Delhi and Moscow, Marshal Zhoverenko, the Head of the Aeroflot, compared the sudden expansion of the Soviet airlines to the way in which champagne rushed out of a bottle which Gopalan, our butler, had just uncorked.

Official relations with the Soviet Government became pleasanter. In Stalin's time, to talk to a Foreign Office official was like talking to a blank wall. Explain your point of view as earnestly as you might, the only reply vouchsafed

would be that he would report it to his Government; or at best, he would repeat the views which had already been expressed in *Pravda*, the Party paper. There was no possibility of a personal, unofficial or informal approach. Since 1953, the Soviet diplomats have become more human. A typical representative of the new type of diplomat was V. V. Kuznetsov. With him it was always possible to discuss things on a personal plane, and he would not even hesitate to express his personal opinion now and then. The fact that he knew English made things easier too. But in Stalin's time, a person who knew English would not speak it. Soon after my arrival in Moscow I called on General Roschchin, who was then the Head of the South-East Asia Section. He used to be the Soviet Military Attache in Chungking during the war and I knew that he could speak English. But in Moscow he summoned an interpreter and spoke to me through him. Kuznetsov could not only speak English but could even crack a joke in that language. He accompanied Jawaharlal Nehru throughout his triumphal tour in the Soviet Union. The hundred-kilometre road from Simferopol to Yalta was lined by crowds holding flowers in their hands, and they would fling the flowers into the car in which the Prime Minister and Indira were travelling. Kuznetsov sat beside them in order to ward off these floral attacks and, in doing so, the thorns on the roses hurt his fingers, which started bleeding. 'Today,' he said, 'I have shed some blood in the cause of Indo-Soviet friendship.'

Socially, too, the relations with Russians became more pleasant. They still hesitated to ask us to their homes, perhaps because they lacked the facilities which diplomats possessed, but official hospitality they extended in full measure. The Kremlin was now thrown open to visitors, and the glittering Georgievsky Hall became the scene of many parties to which diplomats were invited. The Russians shed their fear of talking to foreigners and entering foreign houses. Writers, actors, artistes and even ballerinas took pleasure in coming to our house. To entertain them was a joy, for they made themselves completely at home. They were not finicky about table manners; they did not watch you to see whether you opened your mouth a little too wide or crunched your food a little

In conversation with Prime Minister Bulganin at the Indian Republic Day Reception in 1957, with Mr Khrushchev and Mr Molotov in the background Mr Khrushchev was then First Secretary of the Communist Party and Mr Molotov Foreign Minister

too loudly. The Russian hostess would press food on you, as Indian hostesses do, and you would have to give an explanation if you did not do full justice to any dish. Russian guests made no attempt to scintillate at the table but there was no difficulty in keeping up a conversation because they were always simple, homely and natural. Amongst women, children formed an inexhaustible subject of conversation. Ailments, too; and, as in India, people would disclose intimate details of the diseases they suffered from. At parties, whether formal or informal, there would be innumerable toasts. Some of the toasts which I proposed and the speeches which I made in the USSR were published by the Government of India in a booklet called *The Friendship of Great Peoples*, which was the title of a Soviet film about the visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to India in 1955.

In one way, to arrange a dinner party for the Russians was an ordeal. One never knew until the last minute how many of the invitees would, or would not, come. RSVP meant nothing more to them than it did to us in Kottayam in the old days. I remember my father receiving an invitation from the Bishop of Kottayam with the mysterious letters, RSVP. None of us knew their significance. Some thought that perhaps they denoted the name of the owner of the press where the cards had been printed, Rao Saheb Velu Pillai. Others thought that it indicated the dishes which would be served, *Rasam, Sambar, Vadai, Payasam.* The Russians just ignored the RSVP, and one had to put an officer on special duty to telephone them over and over again in order to find out whether they would be coming. Alfred Gonsalves, my secretary, had to do the table plan over and over again; and sometimes some of the guests who had accepted the invitation would not turn up. This cavalier way of dealing with invitations was exasperating. Once the party got going, however, we forgot our feeling of exasperation, for as guests the Russians were always charming and informal.

With the death of Stalin, Soviet policy towards the neutral and non-aligned States and especially India, entered a new phase. The Soviet Government began to recognize independent

India as a State which counted in international affairs. It was India's formula which removed the last obstacle to peace in Korea. In the Geneva conference on Indo-China, too, India played an important part behind the scenes; and it was India which was entrusted with the chairmanship of the UN Commission on Indo-China.

In Stalin's time India was regarded as a State which was ostensibly independent but was bound hand and foot to the chariot of predatory Western imperialism, which had now merely taken a new form. Then the Soviet press used to dwell on the poverty, misery and ignorance of the Indian people and the extent to which Indian economy was subservient to the West. Now the newspapers began to describe the progress which India had been making after she attained independence and her efforts at economic reconstruction. In Stalin's time a couple of Soviet artists went to India and drew harrowing pictures of the more melancholy aspects of Indian life. The artists who went to India in 1955 caught, on the contrary, the glow and colour, the magic and romance, of Indian culture. In every walk of life the contacts between India and the Soviet Union grew rapidly, and there was a massive exchange of cultural delegations.

In Stalin's time, Jawaharlal Nehru's name hardly ever appeared in the newspapers and no statement made by him was ever published. Now his name became almost a household word in the Soviet Union; and his *Autobiography* was translated into Russian. The ground having been thoroughly prepared, the Soviet Government invited Nehru to visit the Soviet Union. Nehru came in June 1955 and spent about three weeks there. No one has ever received a more tumultuous welcome. It was as if a dyke had suddenly given way and the pent-up emotions of a people who had been chained for a whole generation flowed irresistibly towards a man in whom they found not merely the liberator of his own country but a friend of the Soviet Union and a herald of peace. I travelled with Nehru throughout his three-week tour in the Soviet Union, and every moment of those hectic weeks remains alive in my memory. I remember a sunny afternoon in June, when it looked as if the entire population of Moscow had

come out into the streets with flowers in their hands to receive Nehru; the scene on the airfield, where all the Members of the Praesidium and a number of Ministers and high officials were present, and the large crowds who, in their enthusiasm to see him, broke the cordon and ran towards him, leaving the dignified diplomats high and dry. I also remember *Swan Lake*, which was performed in Nehru's honour in the Bolshoi Theatre, when the Indian National Anthem was not only played but sung, for the first and only time, by some 500 full-throated Russians; the glittering banquet in the Kremlin, which was used for such a purpose for the first time in recent years; the reception in the Embassy, where Khrushchev took in his own arms little Shanker, my private secretary's child, who played with the pimple on Khrushchev's face but refused to go to Bulganin and thus obtained Khrushchev's certificate, 'This child has good judgement'; the factory in Stalingrad where the workers were so eager to see Nehru that they blocked all the entrances and Nehru and his party were unable to get in; Tbilisi, where a chivalrous young man ran alongside Nehru's car for a whole kilometre and presented a bouquet to Indira Gandhi and, having done so, became a lion in the eyes of his comrades and was hoisted by them on their shoulders; the journey from Simferopol to Artek in the Crimea, where the road was covered with the flowers flung at Nehru's car, so much so that the car of the Mayor of Simferopol started skidding on the way back; Central Asia, where too so many heaps of flowers were thrown into the car that it had to be stopped every few furlongs and the roses flung out; and above all, the great meeting at the Dynamo Stadium in Moscow where 100,000 people assembled to hear Nehru speak. 'Was not all this organized?' a foreign press correspondent asked Nehru. 'Perhaps,' said Nehru, 'but you cannot organize men's hearts.'

Khrushchev and Bulganin paid a return visit to India in November 1959. They had as great a reception as Nehru had had in the USSR. Wholeheartedly they responded to the mammoth enthusiasm with which they were greeted, and they made a number of gestures which touched the people's heart.

To mention only one instance, they were the first Government leaders from any European country to greet the Indians in their own way by joining their hands and saying *Namasthe*. In this connexion, I recall an experience in 1940 when I was about to be posted as Dewan of Bharatpur. Hancock, the acting Political Secretary, gave me a few pieces of advice, one of which was: you should be thoroughly British and shake hands with the Maharaja instead of joining your hands before him—a piece of advice which I followed on my first meeting with the Maharaja but discarded at all subsequent meetings.

But Bulganin and Khrushchev made more than gestures. They made pronouncements of policy which greatly strengthened the friendship between the Government of India and the Soviet Government. Again and again they emphasized that India had a right to follow her own path and that the Soviet Government had no intention whatever of foisting its system on India. They described the Head of the Government of India as one of the foremost statesmen of Asia and compared the progress made by India under him to 'a mighty stream which was breaking all barriers and going ahead'. In many of his speeches, Khrushchev also recognized Gandhiji as a great historical figure, who had played a vital part in winning Indian freedom, and thus prepared the way for the revision of the obnoxious passage about Gandhiji in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*. Hitherto the Soviet Government had been non-committal in the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Now they put their weight solidly behind the Government of India and recognized Kashmir as an Indian State. And Dulles tried to counter this by recognizing Goa as 'a province of Portugal'!

Fresh and buoyant from their triumphal journeys in India, Bulganin and Khrushchev returned to the Soviet Union and plunged into the XXth Congress. The significance of this Congress has been fully discussed in *The Flying Troika*. Soon after the Congress, Rene Blum, Minister of Luxembourg and a distinguished Russian scholar, who had been longer in the Soviet Union than any other diplomat, came to my house and said, 'Congratulations on the success of the Congress.' 'Why

congratulate me?' I asked, 'What have I done?' 'Because,' said Blum, 'it was India which opened the eyes of Khrushchev; it was when he and Bulganin went to India that they saw the truth. *Ex oriente lux.*' Of course, Blum was exaggerating; nevertheless the spectacle of a country which was making appreciable progress towards a socialist pattern of society, though not towards socialism of the Marxist variety, must have impressed Khrushchev. Equally he must have been impressed by the manner in which, without resort to violence and indeed while condemning it, India had achieved independence, liquidated princely rule without liquidating the Princes, and consolidated the State. The example of India therefore might have persuaded Khrushchev to come to the conclusion that violence was not essential for the transformation of society and that there could be different roads to socialism.

This, however, was an explosive doctrine. Before long, the Communist world was convulsed with explosions in the two States to which I was concurrently accredited, namely Poland and Hungary. Intoxicated by the doctrine of 'different roads to socialism', Poland began to strut on a path of its own; and Hungary nearly reeled out of the Communist camp. I paid a number of visits to Warsaw and to Budapest before, during and after the Revolution. Those have left on my mind unforgettable impressions which I have described in *Russian Panorama* as well as in *The Flying Troika*. The Revolution, which the Soviet Government called, and still calls, Counter-Revolution, was ruthlessly suppressed. Thereafter, with great resourcefulness, Khrushchev brought Hungary and Poland back into line; he treated them with a judicious mixture of firmness and appeasement: firmness in the political, and appeasement in the economic sphere.

China too began to go her own way, and as time passed the rift between her and the USSR became wider and wider and has now become an open chasm. The diehards of the Party held Khrushchev responsible for the dire events in Poland and Hungary and the imminent break-up of the Communist monolith. His position was now one of great danger, and the only course was to stoop to conquer. At the

New Year party in the Kremlin in 1957 he even declared, 'We are all Stalinists now.'

The real Stalinists in the Praesidium, Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, were still out for his blood. Khrushchev showed his agility by turning the tables on them and getting the Central Committee of the Party to dismiss them as an anti-Party group from the Praesidium and the Central Committee. Eventually Bulganin too was ousted.

I could not help rejoicing over Khrushchev's triumph, for I thought that it was good for the Soviet Union and the world. His great virtue was that he saw the world through his own eyes and not through borrowed spectacles, Marxist, Engelist, or even Leninist, and certainly not Stalinist. He was of course a dedicated Marxist, but he knew that to view problems of war and peace in this nuclear age through the eyes of Marx was like a middle-aged man, who was beginning to develop long sight, wearing the spectacles which had been prescribed for short sight in his youth. 'War', said Clausewitz, 'is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means.' But today the other means would be as disastrous to the nation which used them as to the nation against which they were used. That was why Khrushchev took his courage in both hands at the XXth Congress and modified the dictum of Marx that wars are inevitable. Khrushchev, as Macmillan said, was the first Communist to have realized that Marx was a pre-atomic man.

A further reason why Khrushchev did not want war was that war would be fatal to his plans for improving the living standards of his people. He, unlike other communist leaders hitherto, had the clarity of vision to see, and the candour to admit, that the Soviet people's standards were still behind those in the West; and his supreme ambition was to catch up with the West and overtake it in the shortest possible time. Khrushchev knew the Soviet people much better than Stalin did. Stalin lived in an ivory tower; Khrushchev was nowhere happier than among workers and peasants. He used a language which they could understand, because it was their own language, simple, direct, sometimes coarse, always picturesque and happily

free from ideological conundrums. And if his plans for improving the lot of his people came into conflict with outdated Marxist formulae he had the courage to let the formulae go.

But this man of the people was also an outstanding, though often exasperating, statesman. He, who had no formal education and did not know his ABC before he was 17, could hold his own against the products of Oxford and Cambridge, Yale and Harvard. I have watched him for hours in serious conversation with Jawaharlal Nehru and realized how attentive he can be, how courteous, and how cogent in argument. As the London *Times* put it on the conclusion of his visit to England, Khrushchev could 'marshal facts and figures and pass from the sublime to the ridiculous and the ridiculous to the sublime with an almost Churchillian ease and grace'.

The secret of Khrushchev's real strength, however, did not lie merely in his massive intelligence or limitless resourcefulness, but in the fact that he, more than any other communist leader, represented the country of which he was the leader and the times in which he lived. It is impossible to imagine a Stalin leading the Soviet Union today or in the foreseeable future. As Deutscher put it, Stalin himself has made Stalinism out of date. Stalin took over a Russia illiterate, ignorant, superstitious and priest-ridden, and left it highly educated, fully industrialized and supremely self-confident. For the last thousand years Russia had been having a race with Europe—a race in which she occasionally caught up with Europe and yet was always left behind by such events as the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution and the discovery of the atom bomb which the USA refused to share with her even when she was her wartime ally. Thereupon, the race was renewed with redoubled vigour. Russia too started manufacturing the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb; and, in launching the first sputnik, Russia showed that in certain branches of science, such as rocketry, Russia had even overtaken America. Russia, it was now clear, was in possession of 'the ultimate weapon', the inter-continental ballistic missile. She could now reach any target in the USA within a few minutes; no longer could a Dulles threaten her with 'massive mobile retaliation'.

Thus, having outreached his rivals in space and outwitted his opponents on earth, Khrushchev reverted with confidence to his policy of seeking a *detente* with the West. He visited the USA in the autumn of 1959 and impressed his rugged personality on the people and on Eisenhower, who described him as 'an extraordinary, a dynamic personality'. This was to have been followed by Eisenhower's own visit to the USSR and a series of summit conferences beginning with the one in Paris in the spring of 1960. But the U2 incident intervened; and the two great powers relapsed once more into the attitudes of the cold war.

The election of Kennedy as President of the USA roused hopes of what *Pravda* called a fresh wind in international relations, a wind very different from that which blew when Dulles ruled foreign policy, alive or dead:

> The wind that sends your ship in circles,
> The wind that neither drives out Death
> Nor brings in Summer.

Kennedy, however, had inherited from the previous administration a dismal legacy which caused trouble in Laos, where the legitimate government headed by that neutralist statesman, Souvanna Phouma, was subverted, and in Cuba, which became the scene of an abortive invasion from the USA. Both Khrushchev and Kennedy took care to see that such incidents did not cause any irretrievable damage to their international relations; and it was arranged that Kennedy and Khrushchev should meet in Vienna in the first week of June, 1961. It was on the eve of this meeting that I left Moscow for good.

The last two or three months of our stay in the Soviet Union were hectic. Apart from all the packing and winding up of the house after a stay of nine years, we had to pay farewell calls on all the heads of Missions in Moscow, Warsaw and Budapest, and accept hospitality from many of them. Sohlman, the doyen of the diplomatic corps in Moscow, gave us a farewell party which was attended by all the heads of Missions, including even representatives of countries with which India had no diplomatic relations, such as East Germany and North Korea.

The Prime Minister made a generous mention of my work in Parliament, and the order of Padma Bhushan was conferred on me for 'distinguished service of a high order'. The Moscow University gave me an honorary Doctorate of Historical Sciences. I was told that such an honour had never before been conferred by the University on a diplomat in Tsarist, or Communist, times. In the absence of Khrushchev, Mikoyan, First Deputy Prime Minister, presided at a farewell dinner to us; and Mrs Khrushchev entertained Anujee in her own home, overlooking the Moscow river, and asked the wives of the members of the Praesidium and high civil and military officers to that function.

A Russian friend once proposed a toast—'To the finest diplomat in Moscow and her husband, Mr Menon!' Anujee certainly deserved this compliment. In her own quiet and unobtrusive way she made many Russian friends in all walks of life. She assisted in the production of *Ramayana* in the Children's Theatre and of the *White Lotus*, based on a 7th-century Indian play, *Mricchakatika*, or The Toy Cart, in the Pushkin Theatre. She also had long talks with Balasanyan, the distinguished Armenian composer, regarding the proposed production of *Sakunthala* as a ballet, and with Berkut, a teacher in the Lunacharsky school of dramatic art, regarding the production of *Nala-Damayanthi*. She thus came into contact with a large circle of producers, writers, composers, actors and ballerinas. In this she was helped by her knowledge of Russian, which she learnt with even greater zest than Urdu in Hyderabad, Pushtu in Peshawar and Chinese in Chungking. Thus our joint official life of nearly forty years, which began on the banks of the Kavery, ended, after many vicissitudes, on the Volga. Wherever we were, whether in princely Hyderabad or on the barbaric Frontier, in idyllic Ceylon or metropolitan Delhi, in war-torn China or post-war Russia, Anujee made herself at home; and her mere presence produced an atmosphere of effortless friendliness, in which the rigidity of even Stalinist diplomats seemed to melt.

A diplomat's wife does indeed play a considerable part in the life of her husband. She can almost make or mar his career. As a rule, Indian women have a natural poise,

dignity and sensibility which make them ideal as diplomats' wives. They are not, however, cut in the same pattern. What different types of Indian womanhood were represented in our embassy in Moscow when I was there! Among them were Rokshi Gundevia, wife of our Minister-Counsellor, as big-hearted as she is big-boned, spreading an aura of cheerful goodness whereever she goes; Kamala Ratnam, an intellectual who revelled in the company of intellectuals; Moina, the accomplished wife of Sunil Roy, who played as great a part as her husband in projecting India into Poland; Tanya, who was as eclectic as her origin, for in her veins ran the blood of many different nationalities; Kunji and Saraswathi (Mrs Than and Mrs Vaithianathan), tender hothouse flowers, brought up in highly orthodox families and yet bravely standing up to the unorthodox life of the diplomatic corps and, themselves vegetarian, even cooking non-vegetarian dishes for their carnivorous guests; Ameena, whose gaiety and mastery of languages and in particular Russian formed an asset not merely to Ahuja, her husband, but to me personally and to the Embassy as a whole; Sharada, wife of Brigadier Nanavati, and Geeta, wife of Brigadier Butalia, perfect hostesses, much sought after not merely by Military Attaches and their wives but other members of the diplomatic corps, and whirling in a vortex of entertainment; Meera, wife of Thomas Abraham, a girl of the cloisters, reserved and introspective, too sensitive to make friends indiscriminately and yet adored by the friends she does make; Susheela Purshotham, gentle, eager and affectionate; Shaila, the vivacious and charmingly garrulous wife of Ram Sathe, a link in my life between Nanking, Delhi and Moscow; and Devi, the friendly and winsome wife of K. P. P. Pillai, who too was with me in Nanking, Delhi and Moscow and served me most faithfully as my Private Secretary.

Among Indian women it is rare to find a blue-stocking. Yet I came across a peerless one, who shall remain nameless. Erudite and conscious of her erudition, a good linguist and a good writer, as keen on improving others as on self-improvement, obsessed with the thought that it was as much her mission as her husband's to promote the friendship between the people of India and the country in which he was working,

hardworking, methodical, indefatigable, deferential to her seniors and contemptuous of her juniors, aggressively and defiantly Indian, she was one of those masterful women who should have been born as a man, seemed to regret she was not, and, in trying to be more than a woman, has almost ceased to be one. How often have I, watching her and Anujee together, thought of the Biblical story of Mary and Martha and said to myself that Anujee, like Mary, has chosen the better part! All our friends, Indian and foreign, seemed to think so too.

21

KERALA AGAIN

EVIDENTLY the prediction of the astrologer-poet, Panthalam Krishna Varier, who cast my horoscope and foretold that my stars had destined me for '*Anya desa vasam*', or stay in foreign lands, has been fulfilled. Forty-seven years after I left Kerala as a callow student for Madras, I returned, after my wanderings in four continents, to Kerala and have settled down in a small town called Ottapalam. We also had houses in Bangalore, that paradise of pensioners, and in Kodaikanal, a salubrious hill station, 7,500 ft high, but the call of Kerala was too strong to resist. The only alternative to Ottapalam was Kottayam, where I was born and brought up. But Kottayam is very different from what it was in the early years of this century. I realized this when I recently went to Kottayam and laid the foundation-stone of a magnificent, three-lakh, four-storied Public Library on a site where, in my schooldays, Pariah women used to sell grass at 4 chakrams (2 annas) a bundle and, sometimes, after night-fall, themselves for 8 chakrams. Kottayam has grown too big, too prosperous; it has too many houses, too many people, too many shops, too many cars, too many consumer goods, too much dust, too much wealth and too much poverty. Compared to Kottayam, Ottapalam, like Peter Pan, has hardly grown up. Here is a town where, even in this 20th century, electricity is a novelty and the telephone a rarity, where there are few motor-cars and no motor-cycles, where the rich landlords have come down from their pedestal and the poor bear no resentment against them, where the only industrialist, E. P. Brothers, is regarded as a phenomenon even though he is more a philanthropist than an industrialist, where animals think that they have as much right to use the road as men, where the river meanders in and out of the town, and where houses are but dots on an expanse of fields. Here, in short, Nature has not been altogether ousted by man. So

we opted for Ottapalam, though I must confess that it was not without a wrench that we decided against Kottayam, where I had happily spent the first fifteen years of my life. It is, however, my intention to divide my time between Kottayam and Ottapalam as soon as we can recover possession of our house from a tenant who has been staying there for many years on a nominal rent and professes that Lord Ayyappan, whom he placates by his yearly visits to Sabari Mala, has not given him the green signal to leave Gopi Vilas.

We returned to India in the autumn of 1961. Immediately on my return, I was offered the Vice-Chancellorship of the University of Allahabad and, later, of Kerala. I was, however, nervous of taking a sudden plunge from diplomacy into education. Moreover, I was keen on completing the two books I had projected on Russia. Anujee too had had enough of officialdom. She desired nothing better than to spend the evening of her life quietly in her ancestral home. Her life in Ottapalam, however, has been far from quiet. The frantic attempts of the various governments of Kerala—Congress, Communist and PSP—to pass tenancy legislation have raised a number of problems. Our own tenants have been angels; they never took advantage of the fact that we were absentee landlords and always gave us our due. It was therefore with pleasure and pride, not untinged with regret, that we recently sold them the bulk of our paddy lands, which had been ours for half a century, at a fraction of the price which they would have fetched two or three years ago. I admired the dignity, humility and self-respect of our tenants, who, uneducated, bare-bodied and hitherto untouchable, affixed their signature to a document whereby they crossed the once impassable line from tenants to proprietors.

Anujee bore the brunt of all such transactions; all I had to do was to take a bemused interest in them. I was able to devote most of my time to writing. My *Russian Panorama* was published in 1962, and *The Flying Troika* in 1963. And here goes forth my Autobiography. This book owes its origin to a casual talk which I had with my good friend R. E. Hawkins,

manager of the Oxford University Press in Bombay, who spent a couple of days with me in Moscow in 1957. He told me that a veteran Indian politician had been pestering him to publish his autobiography. The old boy, said Hawkins, had carefully kept clippings of all his speeches and writings and thought that by putting them together he could produce a book worth publishing. A pity, mused Hawkins, that there have been so few good autobiographies by Indians. No wonder, because as Proust has said, it is more difficult to write a good autobiography than to live a good life.

Whether this is a good book or not, I am happy that my previous books, at any rate, have been pronounced good. *Russian Panorama* has had a warm and enthusiastic reception, and the first edition was sold out within a few months of its appearance. Olaf Caroe wrote a glowing review in the Journal of the *Royal Asian Society*, even saying that it takes its place by the side of Kinglake's *Eothen* and Aldous Huxley's *Jesting Pilate*. His generosity was doubtless prompted by his partiality for an old colleague, and I said so in a letter to him. He replied, no, 'there were no dull passages in the book, and it went on smiling to the end like the waves in Aeschylus. You don't know classical Greek, I think, but the translation is "the innumerable laughter of the sea".'

The Flying Troika, dealing with developments in the USSR, internal as well as international, has recently been published in England and India. It too has had a warm reception in India. Only two reviews from England have come to hand so far. One by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart in the *Glasgow Herald* says that it is 'one of the very best of recent works on Soviet Russia'. The other, a most interesting one, appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*. It is at once critical and complimentary, agrees with some of my judgements, differs from others, and concludes with a pat on my back ('In writing it, Mr Menon has added to the lustre of his country's diplomatic service'). The reviewer, however, has accused me of having 'strong prejudices'. 'Why strong prejudices are attributed to you,' wrote Hawkins, 'I cannot think.' I replied that I myself could not understand why 'strong prejudices' had been attri-

buted to me any more than 'high intelligence'. ('An observer of high intelligence, if strong prejudices, he here presents a lively account of the process of destalinization, both in domestic and in international policy.')

The comment in the *Times Literary Supplement* has provoked me to a little self-examination, a pastime in which I seldom indulge. Am I a man of strong prejudices? I think not. If the reviewer had said prejudice instead of prejudices he would have been on firm ground. I did indeed have a strong prejudice, amounting to allergy, against one man, John Foster Dulles; and his sanctimonious pronouncements always gave me the creeps. I suppose everyone has a *bete noire* and its nature depends on his own temperament. In my young days my favourite author used to be Anatole France. I concluded from his novels, as indeed from the New Testament, that the worst of all sins was the sin of the Pharisee, self-righteousness. Anatole France's Abbe Jerome Coignard in his finest novel, *At the Sign of the Reine Pedauque,* one of the most lovable characters in all fiction, breaks almost all the Ten Commandments and yet remains lovable because he is altogether free from that sin and loves his fellow men. No one, I suppose, has observed the Ten Commandments more punctiliously than Dulles, and yet he is repellent to me as a man and as a statesman because of his self-righteousness. My reviewer makes no bones of his record as a statesman. 'That Dulles', says the review, 'was intellectually and temperamentally incapable of conceiving of coexistence is one of the most tragic accidents of personality in the whole record of postwar international relations.'

It is equally tragic that J. F. Kennedy, so different from J. F. Dulles, so gay, buoyant, radiant with youth and charm, supremely self-confident and yet refreshingly resilient, should have fallen to an assassin's bullet. And now comes the news that Jawaharlal Nehru is seriously ill. When he, too, passes from the stage, the world will be the poorer, not merely for statesmen and politicians but for all men and women who, despite the growth of dialectical materialism, look for the quality of grace in the conduct of public affairs.

After my retirement I have been no less busy than before. I have been sitting with the Union Public Service Commission

for a couple of months every year selecting candidates for the IFS and IAS. I delivered the Ramaswami Mudaliar lectures in the Kerala University in 1961 and the Sardar Patel lectures in Delhi in 1962; and I have been invited to deliver the Sayaji Rao Memorial lectures in the University of Baroda and the Sarojini Naidu Memorial lectures in the Indian Institute of International Affairs. I also undertook a goodwill mission to Ceylon on behalf of the Government of India and delivered a series of lectures on 'Changing Patterns of Life in Asia'.

In Kerala itself, I am never left in peace. Apart from having to speak at schools and colleges, I have become an almost professional president at centenaries and jubilees, silver and gold. I presided at the silver jubilee of the Temple Entry Proclamation by the Maharaja of Travancore at Trivandrum and at the golden jubilee of the Nair Service Society; and Anujee presided at the unveiling of the statue of its nonagenarian founder, Mannath Padmanabhan, at Pandalam. I also presided at the Tagore centenary and the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's birth at Ottapalam, at the centenary of the birth of G. Parameswaran Pillai at Trivandrum, and at the centenary of the Government High School, Cannanore, where Sir Sankaran Nair was educated a hundred years ago. On the lovely seashore of Cannanore, I saw the forlorn tombstone of K. Ramakrishna Pillai, who deserves to be remembered as a fighter for liberty. Early in this century, he exposed in a newspaper the doings of an autocratic Dewan of Travancore and was deported from the State. Together with his wife, B. Kalyani Amma, he spent the rest of his life in Cannanore. Even after his death, his wife refused to set foot in Travancore until India became independent and the days of autocracy were over. A more illustrious fighter for freedom was G. Parameswaran Pillai who also raised his voice, in 1880, against the arbitrary acts of a Dewan of Travancore and deported himself to Madras before the official order of deportation could be served on him. In Madras, he made a name as the Editor of the *Standard*, became Secretary of the Indian National Congress, reached the notice and won the praise of Mahatma Gandhi himself, and was well on his way to the front rank of our nationalist leaders when he prematurely died.

The mention of these political rebels does not mean that Travancore was a reactionary State, or that its rulers were tyrannical. On the contrary, Travancore was always reckoned as one of the most enlightened Princely States in India; and its rulers, from Sri Marthanda Varma to Chithira Thirunal, were dedicated men who strove for the welfare of the people. The present Maharaja will always be remembered as the man who, long before untouchability was abolished by the Government of India, threw the temples of Travancore open to all classes of Hindus, including untouchables. He paid a visit to the Soviet Union when I was Ambassador at Moscow. He was accompanied by his mother, a woman of great vitality and charm, comparable to Madame Chiang Kai-shek herself, but whereas Madame Chiang was a phenomenon in a country which for centuries had held women in subjection, the Maharani Dowager of Travancore was an authentic product of our matrilineal system. So was her sister, the Senior Maharani, who ruled the State with great sagacity during the minority of the present Maharaja. The Maharaja and his mother produced as agreeable an impression on the minds of the Soviet leaders as they used to do on the Viceroys of India.

I concluded the first peripatetic year of my retirement by a visit to Russia. Air-India invited us to be its guests on the inaugural flight of its Boeing between Delhi and Moscow. It was while I was in Russia that I heard of the Chinese attack on India. I could hardly believe it; I had regarded a Chinese invasion of India as something inconceivable. A border scramble here and there perhaps, but an invasion, never! Soon after this event, China stepped up her verbal attacks on Russia to unprecedented heights. She accused Khrushchev of cowardice and 'capitulationism' during the Cuban crisis, which synchronized with the attack on India. It became more and more clear that the quarrel between China and Russia, which had hitherto been conducted anonymously on ideological lines, had deep roots, historical, territorial and even racial.

Both China's neighbours have learnt a lesson from her. The USSR has learnt, what she had long suspected but would

not admit, that a common ideology was no bar to the play of national egoism. And India has learnt, what she did not fully realize, that subscription to the Five Principles, backed by two thousand years of friendship, was no guarantee against aggression.

When I came back to India on my retirement in 1961, I was distressed to observe the deterioration in our relations with China. The correspondence between the two Governments was getting more and more vehement, not to say virulent. Our secretariat seemed to be vying with the Chinese in using hard, not to say rude, words. We seemed to have lost the British art of understatement, and the even subtler art of giving the soft word which turneth away wrath—an art in which Nehru sometimes excelled and which I too tried to cultivate as Foreign Secretary. With the publication of the correspondence with China, the Indian people even began to regard the Chinese as enemies. This, I thought, was a deplorable development. I reminded Nehru of the warning which he himself had once given that a nation must not let the iron enter its soul. I also reminded him of the words he wrote on the conclusion of his visit to the USSR in 1927 that 'between two such neighbours as India and Russia there can be amity or enmity. There is no question of indifference'. Wise words, equally applicable to China. As a sign of our chagrin with China over the frontier question we had withdrawn our Ambassador from China some years ago, leaving our embassy in charge of a junior officer; China withdrew hers from India much later. I would have liked to go to China as Ambassador and see if anything could be done to arrest the drift to disaster. The Prime Minister thought that the appointment of an Ambassador at that particular juncture would be a positive step and that it would be difficult to take it, especially on the eve of the general election in India, unless the Chinese made a friendly gesture. The elections took place; and still things went on as before, notes continued to be exchanged with increasing heat, and mutual recrimination became sharper and sharper, until the matter passed beyond words and the Chinese resorted to a brutal attack on the Indian frontier in the autumn of 1962.

Khrushchev once told me that the great danger in frontier

questions was that both countries were apt to regard them as matters of national prestige rather than national interest, even if no material interests were involved. Russia had had a frontier problem with Iran which went on for a hundred years, but Khrushchev said that he settled it as soon as he had the power even by giving away some territory to which Russia had a plausible claim. I too feared that our frontier dispute with China might go on for a number of years, though not for a century, but I little expected that it would result in war.

Perhaps I was naive in thinking that there would never be a war between India and China or that any action or concession on our part could have prevented the dire events of 1962. Perhaps after all there is such a thing as historical inevitability, though not in the Marxist sense. 'History', says Paul Valery, 'is the most dangerous concoction the chemistry of the mind has produced. Its properties are well known. It sets people dreaming, intoxicates them, engenders false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, keeps old wounds open, torments their leisure, inspires them with megalomania or persecution complex, and makes nations bitter, proud, insufferable and vain.'[1] How true these words are as a description of present-day China!

Though Ottapalam is our headquarters in retirement, we have been spending a good deal of our time elsewhere. My brothers' children have always been very close to me. I have spent many happy weeks with Bhasi in Bangalore, Sarasu in Delhi and Rajan in Bombay. In Ottapalam itself, my happiest hours are spent with my father's nephews, Padmanabhan and Govindan Kutty, who stayed with us at Kottayam fifty years ago and nobly never resented the little luxuries which my mother gave me behind my father's back. Another relation whose company I always enjoy is a cousin of mine, slightly older than me, Damodaran Chettan. Music has been the passion of his life and it nearly ruined him. He was at school with us in Kottayam and we regarded him as a ne'er-do-well because, if any wandering minstrel came anywhere near, he would give up his studies and follow him or her.

[1] Translated by Francis Scarfe, *Reflections on the World Today*, p. 36.

Eventually, Gopi Chettan took pity on him and sent him to study agronomy in Nagpur. There he made good, and, in due course, he rose to be the Director of Agriculture in three Indian states, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Hyderabad. Music, however, continued to be his passion; where music was concerned, he was a tyrant. He insisted that all the members of his family, including even his sons, who had no special taste for music, should learn to sing or play. His devoted wife has become proficient on the veena, his delightful daughters sing and dance, and their home has always been a home to me.

As for friends, apart from relations, I confessed in *Delhi-Chungking* that 'the company of most men and all unattractive women bore me to tears, though I try not to show it'. I cannot bear to make new, and ever new friends, or exalt my numerous acquaintances into that category. I believe in the old Chinese proverb:

> In clothes the new are best,
> In friends the old are best.

Even now, the friends whose company I enjoy most are those of my school or college days, some of whom have found a mention in this book.

Among the friends I made subsequently, the oldest are the Hamid Alis. Between them, as they wrote to me recently, they are 166 years old, and they are as cultured a couple as I have come across in any part of the world. Bhaiji and Appa, as we call them, are gracious survivals from a vanishing age and are adepts at the vanishing, if not vanished, art of elegant conversation and correspondence. Another great friend of ours who writes equally charming letters with an archaic grace is Devika Rani, the pioneer among Indian film actresses, married to Svetoslav Roerich, the gifted painter who was Russian in origin and has adopted India as his home, as his father, who was a distinguished philosopher as well as painter, had done. A newer friendship of only twenty years' standing is that between Godavarma Raja, the brother-in-law of the Maharaja of Travancore, and myself. With a mind seething with ideas, a passion for travel, a love of sports, which he has done more to develop than anyone else,

and his spirit of independence, Godavarma Raja is the eternal student, and the idol of the students of Kerala.

Among comparatively recent friends, I must not forget Jehangir Patel. I met him first in Nanking as a lusty bachelor in his early forties, and a year or two later, as a rather nervous, beatific bridegroom. Now he and his charming Spanish wife, Sophie, are settled in an elegant flat in Bombay, setting an example of gracious living in this ungracious century with a few good friends, a few good books and a few good pictures—a few, because Jehangir can never sacrifice quality for quantity. His home has often been a haven of rest to us; and the picture that lingers in my mind is that of Sophie keeping count of the minutes when J.P. is standing on his head, doing his yogic exercises. Perhaps this daily posture explains why he, a successful business man, always sees the world in a humorous and refreshing light.

I have lost touch with most of my English friends, except two whose friendship I treasure, Olaf Caroe and Herbert Thompson. Occasionally I hear from my old tutors at Christ Church, Keith Feiling and J. C. Masterman. I was pleased when J. C. Masterman wrote to me not long ago that he always thought that All Souls made a mistake in not having elected me a Fellow.

Foremost among my English friends in India now is R. E. Hawkins, manager of the Oxford University Press. Until I came to know him I did not know that collaboration between an author and publisher was so important or could be so fruitful. Hawk, as we call him, has a sense of style and has saved me from many verbal infelicities. I have, in deference to his advice, left out a couple of four-letter words which, though in common use, have not yet found a place in the Oxford English Dictionary. I have also reluctantly left out a historic letter bristling with four-letter words, from the Cossacks of the Ukraine to the Sultan of Turkey, of which Khrushchev gave me a copy and which formed the subject of a famous painting by Repin. However, I refused to change one or two Indian similes which jarred on Hawk's sensitive English ears. Hawk has a dry wit and disarming manner, and, like most of his cultured countrymen, errs on the side of understatement.

Perhaps the only occasion when he erred on the other side was at the last (fortyfirst) anniversary of our wedding, when he sent a telegram: CONGRATULATIONS TO MY FAVOURITE AUTHOR.

Hitherto, my life had been singularly free from sorrows, but now fate showed that no man was exempt from them. The health of my son, Kumar, caused much concern until he got married to a charming girl, Sathi. My elder brother, Gopi Chettan, who was more than a brother to me, passed away, mourned by a host of friends and relations, rich and poor, whom he had helped and many of whom he had set up in life. Anujee lost her only brother. Worst of all, my eldest daughter's husband suddenly died of heart-failure. All our daughters are happily married, but none was more happily married then Ammini. She had had no existence apart from her husband. It was sad to see her desolate and forlorn after he was snatched away from her; and we were fortunate to be back in India in time to wean her back to life—and reconciliation with life.

Death has also started picking my contemporaries right and left. Within the same week died two of my friends who had passed out into the ICS together with me in 1921, namely A. S. P. Iyer, who rose to be a Judge of the High Court and was an indefatigable speaker and writer, and Sukumar Sen, who did so well in an assignment under the Sudan Government that a street in Khartoum has been named after him. I heard of their deaths in the Safdarjung Hospital at Delhi at a time when death seemed to have its baleful eye on me too.

In March 1963 I was on the way to the main hall in the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, to deliver a lecture on 'Administration: Then and Now', when I slipped on the marble floor, fell, and fractured my hip-joint. The result was four months' stay in hospital and a serious operation which was performed by a great orthopaedic surgeon, Professor Duraiswami. Even he, however, has not been able to restore fully the old mobility of my limbs. I could not but reflect on the irony of what happened in civilized Delhi to the legs which had taken me safely through the wildest country in the world,

across the Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Pamirs, to Central Asia, and which survived the ice and snow of nine winters in Moscow.

How true it is that pride goes before a fall! It was literally true in my case. I used to be proud of my health; I used to think that at the age of 65 I kept fitter than my sons in their thirties and my sons-in-law in their forties. I, too, had had trouble with my back and my lungs, but I shook off these ailments by my yearly visits to the Crimea or the Black Sea and by the observance of a few simple rules of diet and exercise which my Russian doctors had taught me. These exercises I used to do religiously every morning, even, to the amusement of my fellow-passengers, in the train, and in Ottapalam with my rollicking grandchildren, who joined me in doing them. With them, too, I used to enjoy long walks in the lovely countryside around Ottapalam, across the paddy-fields and on the river banks. All this now lies behind me: for the rest of my life I have to walk with a support and literally watch my steps.

Many of my contemporaries have joined the private sector and are drawing bigger salaries than they ever drew before. I myself prefer the calm and peace of this village-town, Ottapalam, where I can do what I wish to do and need not do what I do not wish; where I can read and write, free from the distractions of telephone calls and cocktail parties; where I can watch the river, Bharatapuzha, normally so placid and listless, rising furiously during the monsoon and threatening to burst its banks, and subsiding, after the monsoon, into her shallow, smiling self; where I can see the pepper vine we have planted climbing higher and higher, the areca-nut growing taller and taller, and the coconut trees, neglected during our forty years' exile from Malabar, bursting into fruit at the first administration of a little fertilizer; and where I always have the company of one or more of my children and grandchildren, so far totalling 16, and can now look forward to a series of great-grandchildren too, the first of whom should soon be born in Geneva.

How different the lives of our grandchildren are going to be from those of their forefathers! One of their great-great-

grandfathers (my father) was born at Ottapalam in 1850, and the other (Anujee's father) seven years later in the year of the Mutiny. And to *their* grandparents the invasion of Malabar by Tippu Sultan at the end of the 18th century was a vivid memory. In fact, out of the hundred Nair families which had settled in this region, their families were among the three or four which survived that invasion, the others having been uprooted and dispersed hither and thither or converted to Islam. On the outskirts of Ottapalam, there is a spot called Bungalow Hill, where Tippu Sultan had built a bungalow, in which he rested for a few days in the course of his invasion of Malabar. That hill, commanding a lovely view of the winding Bharatapuzha, the Palghat Gap and the spurs of the Western Ghats, is now our property.

In the eventful century and a half following Tippu's invasion, Ottapalam has changed little, as compared with other towns in Kerala. Yet change must come and is coming. Among the institutions which have sprung up during the last few years are a college, a convent, a match factory, a Mission hospital, electricity which often fails, water-supply which has not yet been extended to the houses, a Kalalaya, a Mahilalaya, the NES Block, a Lions Club and a branch of the Communist Party, which beat a highly respected Congress candidate during the elections to the State Assembly. We view these changes with hope, not unmixed with fear, because we know from our experience elsewhere how much misery change for the sake of change can bring, though sometimes the refusal to change can be an even greater calamity. All we can do is to keep an eye on the coming changes and perhaps even to influence their pace and direction quietly so that our children and children's children may be able to lead a better life. Better? More crowded and exciting perhaps, but less full and less graceful, because there will be less room for leisure.

Aristotle once drew a distinction between work, play and leisure. He defined work as something which one did for the sake of something else; play as reaction from work; and leisure, which he regarded as higher and nobler than work and play, as the employment of time in an activity for its own sake.

Many contemporaries of mine, British and Indian, have distinguished themselves by doing more work and indulging in more play than I have done; and some have enjoyed greater leisure, in the Aristotelian sense of the word. When I look back on my own life it is the moments of leisure which stand out. I too have valued my leisure: leisure, as a schoolboy, to write letters in verse to my sisters-in-law; leisure, while working for Schools at Oxford, to climb Skiddaw, Helvellyn and Ben Lomond; leisure, while investigating the condition of Indians in East Africa, to circumnavigate Lake Victoria and to drive over the Rift Valley and the Serengeti plains; leisure, in Ceylon, to go in a bullock-cart to the ancient temple of Kataragama and to climb Adam's Peak at night and see it at sunrise, casting its shadow like a huge monster across the plains; leisure, during the second world war, to ride and walk from India to China along the old pilgrim route; leisure to observe the beauty and oddities of men and women and the majesty and vagaries of Nature and to set it all down in writing; leisure, in the midst of all the bustle of diplomacy in Moscow, to undertake a week's cruise on the Volga, or a long trip to Armenia or Siberia, to Baku on the Caspian Sea or Murmansk on the Arctic Ocean; leisure to escape from some ceremonial meeting or inane cocktail party into the recesses of Sokolniki Park or Cerebrenni Bor (Silver Woods), there to stroll about or simply

> to stand beneath the boughs
> And stare as long as sheep or cows;

leisure, in Anujee's case, to spend an hour in meditation, both in the morning and in the evening, wherever she might be and whatever her preoccupations. Future generations of civil servants, administrators and diplomatists, and even pensioners in Ottapalam, will have more scope for work and play but, alas!, less for leisure.

EPILOGUE

I entrusted the manuscript of this book to the publishers in the first part of 1964 and then went off with Anujee on a journey round the world. We spent more time in the USA than elsewhere, thus seeking to correct a possible lacuna in our vision. The Civil Rights Bill, which was passed while we were there, must be regarded as a milestone on the path of liberty.

During the last year, there have also been some melancholy events. Jawaharlal Nehru died, but this has not meant the end of the Nehru era. Nikita Khrushchev is dead politically, but there is no reason to fear that the Khrushchev era has ended. And now comes the news of the death of Winston Churchill. He was not so much the herald of a new era as the ultimate product of an old and adventurous one, which began with the Elizabethan age and culminated, under his leadership, in England's 'finest hour' in the Second World War.

When Stalin died, John Foster Dulles exclaimed exultantly, 'The Stalin era is over; the Eisenhower era has begun.' In that context the word 'era' was misused. The so-called Eisenhower era and Stalin era were no more than episodes in American, and Russian, history. What makes a period an era is the emergence, or resurgence, of certain powerful ideas fructifying civilization. Such were Nehru's concepts of a secular democracy, a socialistic pattern of society and non-alignment. Such, too, were Khrushchev's declarations, in modification of classical Marxist tenets, that war is not inevitable, that violence is not essential for the transformation of society and that there can be different forms of socialism. These ideas will continue to ferment in the minds of men, and mould the conduct of nations for generations to come.

Elsewhere also there have been hopeful developments. England has a new government which, despite its precarious majority, has shown a refreshing vigour in the first hundred days of its existence. In Europe, the idea of European unity

is struggling valiantly against the survival of old historical animosities. In Asia and Africa, liberation, not merely from foreign yoke but from native custom, is proceeding apace. And everywhere co-existence is recognized as the only alternative to co-extinction.

The idea of peaceful and fruitful co-existence has penetrated even into the ecclesiastical sphere, as shown by the recent stirrings in the Vatican and the historic visit of the Pope to India and the Holy Land.

China alone remains outside the main stream of history. She is now all the more defiant, with an atom bomb in her hands. Throughout the world there is an increasing, if often unspoken, recognition of the menace that China is today. There is also increasing appreciation of the fact that the way to meet this menace is not simply by trying to contain her but by a determined effort to end her isolation and to draw her into the United Nations and subject her to its influences and discipline.

Thus I have seen the world jogging along and, on the whole, progressing towards a new world order. I have seen my own Kerala progressing, during the last six decades, from the matrilineal to the patrilineal (though by no means patriarchal) system, from the bullock-cart and the country-boat, in which I used to do my earliest journeys, to the motor-car and the jet plane, in which I did my latest, from the primeval simplicity of Mahabali's rule to the sophisticated struggle for power between the official Congress party in Kerala, the Kerala Congress which has been set up in opposition to it, the Rightists of the Communist party, and the Leftists, led by a man who used to call himself Centrist. A cynic may ask whether all this denotes progress or its reverse; whether indeed man is not heading towards nuclear disaster. Who can tell? On the whole, I feel moderately optimistic. I take comfort from the persistence of the Nehru tradition, the Khrushchev tradition and the Kennedy tradition. It is also a matter for satisfaction that in this world, so full of discords, there should be a multiracial, multinational Commonwealth of Nations, with its membership spread over five continents. Imitation is the best form of flattery, and even Communists, who used

to swear by the monolithic unity of the Socialist Camp, have started talking of a Commonwealth of Socialist States. Politicians sometimes speak of a world government and poets have sung of the 'Parliament of man, the Federation of the world'. These, in an organizational sense, are unlikely to materialize. The best one can hope for is that the spirit of the Commonwealth will continue to ripple, in ever-widening circles, into a greater Commonwealth, ultimately embracing all mankind.

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